BRAJ THE CENTRUM OF INDIAN CULTURE

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Moti Lal Gupta

THE BOOK

Between the years 1976 and 1979 under the aegis of the University Grants Commission the author undertook at the University of Jodhpur and MSJ College, Bharatpur (affiliated to the Rajasthan University) a study of the unpublished manuscripts of the Vaishnavite poets of Rajasthan. The findings were compiled under the heading 'Semiotics of Braj Culture' based on unpublished manuscripts of poets of Rajasthan devoted to Krishna cult. The present book is a sort of condensed version of the findings incorporated in the original compilation, defining semiotics and also analysing and synthesising the several traits of Braj Culture.

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BRAJ

THE CENTRUM OF INDIAN CULTURE

State Museum • Lucknow

MOTI LAL GUPTA

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PREFACE

I retired from the services of the University of Jodhpur in the year 1973 and then joined a project of the London University as a programme coordinator. Towards the close of 1975 with an award of UGC I worked for one full year at the University of Jodhpur trying to get utmost advantage of the Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute with its headquarters in Jodhpur. I have been attached to this Institute ever since I joined the then SMK College, Jodhpur as the PG Head of the Hindi Department in the year 1958. After that, with the permission of all concerned, I shifted my project to Bharatpur College which has so much to do with the Braj area. My proposal for the project was for four years but due to UGC rules I could not be allowed more than two years and some months with the result that the investigations are rather not so complete and the analyses a little hurried.

The story of the selection of the topic is a little interesting. The topic has some important words and each one has a special significance from my point of view. I had just, then, returned from Milan, Italy, where I was invited by Professor Umberto Eco to attend the first International Congress on Semiotics. The word was so very fresh in my mind and I wanted it to apply to Culture, specially to the culture of Braj which happens to be the region of my birth. Manuscripts and Rajasthan have been dear to me from the time of my first doctoral efforts and continued till the completion of my post doctoral thesis. I had devoted so much time in studying the Rajasthani manuscripts that they have become an integral part of my being. With Braj, the Krishna Cult is a must and all cultural attempts are directed to it. Hence the Krishna Cult was added to it. This, of course, gave a long name to my project.

At a few International Congresses, for example, the International Symposium in Vienna, the International Congress in Regesburg and to the First Congress of Semiotics in Milan I have made contributions on Cultural Semiotics. Semiotics, now, covers so many fields of human activity.

The delay in the acceptance of the topic by the UGC reduced the period of my original intentions. Yet, I could with great effort try to do justice and I am aware of the incomplete treatment. My efforts for getting at the materials involved extensive field work and the difficulty of approach only a scholar studying manuscripts can comprehand. But my long associations with individuals and institutions stood me in good stead.

It was my good luck that I had many opportunities to attend some of the International Congresses connected with my work, meet some very important scholars, the initiators of this topic in its present form, to solve and clarify certain conceptions. I do admit that some new thinking has taken place and some of the conceptions are fast changing but the basic notions remain the same and I am sure that the Second International Congress in Vienna would throw much light towards solving many such problems.

I must express my gratitude to the UGC, the two Institutions where I worked, persons connected with the Institutes possessing manuscripts, scholars whom I had consulted and all those who have helped me in my work. I can only say that if my contribution can throw some fresh light, in a novel way, on the culture of the area I shall consider my efforts successful.

MOTI LAL GUPTA

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INTRODUCTION

SEMIOTICS

In my project the word '*Semiotics*' deserves a special mention. In the plan of the project I have given some idea of what the expression means and how it attracted my attention. But the term needs some more explanation about the concept it carries with it and in what particular sense I have accepted the term for my interpretation. Before attempting that however, I would like to refer to the proceedings of two work-groups on Semiotics which met under the auspices of the UNESCO in the years 1965 and 1966.

Their proceedings are recorded in '*Sign-Language Culture*' published by Mouton in 1970. It had an editorial board of world famous scholars, including A.J. Greimas (France), R. Jakobson (USA), M.R. Mayenowa (Poland), S.K. Saumjan (USSR), W. Steinitz (GDR) and S. Zolkiewski (Poland). The articles are in English, French, Polish and Russian and the discussions of the two work-groups took place in Warsaw and Kazimierz respectively. The main divisions were :

1. General Topics : Structuralism, semantics, signs and semantic systems, relation between linguistics and logic, subcode in semiotics.

2. The Problem of meaning : Meaning and reference, semiotic solution, functional approach to the logical semiotics of natural languages, verbal signs, metaphor and metonymy in linguistics, semantics and meaningfulness.

3. Models of Language : Language of mathematical logic, system of linguistic signs, semiotics and theory of generative grammar, problems of semantic analysis, paradoxical models of language.

4. Psychology of Language : Semantic fields, animal communication.

5. Zoosemiotics.

6. The Reconstruction and Description of nonlinguistic semiotic signs.

7. The Semiotics of films : Cinema, connotation and denotation in a film, film as language, semantics in film arts.

8. Semiotics of Visual Art : Field and vehicles in image-signs, images in signs, the history of art.

9. Semiotics of Literature : Generative poetics, generative grammars, stylistics and poetics, sequence narratives.

10. The Problem of quotation : Description, expression, basic function of quotations.

All these ten divisions contain articles from eminent scholars in the field of semiotics. Many articles are by Russians and Polish semioticians. Eastern Europe is well represented through these authors. Poland in particular seems to enjoy greater reputation in the field and it was there that both the workshops had been organised. The articles speak about the vast field of topics and plenty of interpretation and lot of new terms. Besides, there are some more divisions of the science like sociology, anthropology, discourse analysis, lexicons, kinesics, all types of art under semiotics and metasemiotics. Here I have also to mention another comprehensive book being brought out by the world-known publishers Mouton under the veryable editorship of Thomas A. Sebeok assisted by Julia Kristeva and Josette Rey-Debove. It is to run into twenty volumes like—Animal Communication, Semiotic Approach to Psychiatry, Grammar, Functions of Folk Costumes, State of Art, Gesture and Environment, Structural Models in Folklore, The War with Words, Sign Language among North American Indians, General Theory of Signs, Warsaw Symposium in 1968 and the Meaning of Information. Throwing a glance on these headings we may conclude that all these different topics are moving round the big topic 'Culture', for culture is so comprehensive a term that it contains all human activity.

Human activity lies in expression, and semiotics is mainly expression through several devices. When we come to expression we go a little beyond human beings and enter into the field of non-human living beings which we have been observing from times immemorial, that communication has been playing its part in that stage of life too It has led us to Zoosemiotics, where semioticians and linguists have taken patience to observe the behaviour of all species of beings and come to many conclusions which are of a diverse nature but which when put together lead to the conclusion that there are constant attempts at expression in that world as well. It is our daily experience also. In the human world expression is of many types and differs at several levels. Even in one country like India if we happen to note the ways of behaviour in variety of types and stages we will be amazed at the differences and the ways involved. When I consider the entire phenomena of semiotics I find myself in deep waters, for there seems to be no escaping from it in whatever field of activity we enter. In the topics and divisions given above it has been noted that scholars have attempted on specific problems in the field and they have found their own results. Many fields of activity still remain uncovered.

The basic function of semiotics is expression of thoughts which may be expressed or implied. The Polish scholar Stephan Morawski points out that it is 'maintenance of cultural continuity'. This was said in connection with a quotation which is so well connected with traditions. Its vitality demonstrates a continuity, a renewed partaking of the achievements of the human race. It goes on changing in the light of the continual process of human development and advancements. But certain traditional thoughts are so deep-rooted and of such a permanent nature that the same symbols can continue to exist for ages and in places far apart from each other. Below I give some examples of such symbolic expressions which have a wide application :

Prisoner	denoted by	man shut up in an enclosure,
Quarrel	,,	duplicated sign 'woman',
Debauchery	,,	trebled sign 'woman',
Friendship	,,	two hands, often joined together,
Want	,,	two hands spread for a 'woman',

Rest	denoted by	a man and a tree side by side,
Light	,,	sun and moon; sometimes the sun only,
Lead	,,	horse+hand,
Beautiful	,,	ram+large; rather peculiar to show the extent,
Love	,,	mother+child; surely the '*vatsalya*' of Sanskrit,
Spend the night	,,	roof+man+mat,
Loyalty	,,	middle+heart; how to show this 'middle',
Have	,,	hand holding meat; may be food,
Follow	,,	diagram of human shapes falling; reminds flock of sheep,
Gather	,,	Birds sitting on a tree,
Signing	,,	doubled sign 'fire', and
Think	,,	sign 'present'+heart; a little peculiar

and in this way we can gather so many signs together and enter into the meaning which they indicate. The road signals can also give a very good example of this type of semiotic behaviour; more so, as they are of a universal nature and adopted by almost all the people round the world because in these days of fast travel and lessening of distances such road symbols are needed which can be followed by persons belonging to different nationalities. Even the practice of lefthand drive in U.K. seems to present a difficulty to the owner drivers, specially if they happen to be women. The few examples given above refer to a particular area but some of the signs are of a universal application and one can easily follow them without being told.

For making ourselves known to the other party we employ a device for doing so. Our behaviour may be verbal or non-verbal. Semiotics comes in the category of non-verbal behaviour and has many devices to make it effective. It is possible that communication began with the creation of life because without making ourselves understood by others life does not seem a possibility. Even when there were two, as goes the tradition about Adam and Eve, there must have been a necessity for communication and consequently means to do so. Language as such is a later development. I do not want to enter into the controversy how language got its shape but it must have begun as a number of audible signs made by one towards the other. It should have been some kind of vocalisation for effecting communication. Even now organised sign language is found in some parts of the world. Some North American tribes communicate through a system of hand movements with mutual understanding and thus carry on all their business. In India, too, the Naga tribes of Assam have a remarkably flexible sign language which reveals inventiveness and ingenuity on the part of the communicator. There is a reference that when Rama and Lakshmana were in exile, according to the story told in the *Ramayana*, they often used sign language; for example when Rama asked Lakshmana to chop off the ears and nose of Shurpanakha they talked through signs of hands and fingers. In Australia also gestures formed the basis for an extended system of signs among aborgines. Gestures, facial expressions and bodily movements facilitate communication among all people, kinesically supplementing and emphasising verbal behaviour. Really speaking formal language is only a part of our communicative behaviour.

It has been observed that all people have a set of signs, symbols and gestures that serve the system of communication. Semiotics means, to a lay man, the science of symbols and symptoms. It was for this reason that in its early stages Semiotics was a branch of medical science, interpreting symptoms. Now it is a symbolic behaviour conveying definite meaning. In India we have the *Sanketvigyan* or the *Pratikavidya* which deal with signs and symbols and are allied to the modern science of semiotics. The first of these Indian sciences is connected with bodily actions and the second makes use of physical objects. It is rightly observed that Indian symbolism is of an extensive nature, frequently used in the field of religion, art and literature, conveying definite ideas, feelings or sentiments. Language is also a sort of sign assembling device but it has been so organised that it forms a different system by itself. Semiotics helps us in understanding very many intricacies of systematic language and furnishes useful material for comparison between human language and animal communication. The non-verbal behaviour in the act of communication, thus is of two types: 1. supplementing or extending the language communication, and 2. serving as a means of communication by itself. While talking of the latter I may add here that in India there are many occasions for men and women when they will be under a vow of silence. Sometimes, as in the case of members of the Jain community, these periods of silence are very long. Some ascetics go about silent for years and some do not speak, regularly each day for a particular time. During such periods all kinds of gestures and signs are used for communication, atleast on the part of the person who is observing silence. Here I am reminded of the story that is told about the famous Sanskrit poet Kalidasa who was made to undergo a kind of discussion with the scholarly princess Vidyottama by means of gestures with fingers and fists. The story goes that the gestures were interpreted so very ingeniously that it resulted in the marriage of the scholarly princess with the most unlearned Kalidasa who was so at that time. He is supposed to have attained a high degree of literary ability after his marriage at the instance of his wife.

The Indian practice of using signs and symbols provides lot of interesting information. Pregnancy of a cow is exhibited by tying down peacock feathers round the neck of the cow. The birth of a son is hailed by sweet chimes of a metal plate while the same of a daughter is decried by breaking an earthen pot. Communities and sects are verified by some external marks of identification: a Sikh by his long hair, a Jain saint by the piece of cloth over his lips, a Hindu of a devoted type by the tuft on his head and the thread passing over his left shoulder. *Talikas* of various type relate to the particular sect to which an individual belongs. Dresses also lead to some good conclusions. The *salvār* and *dupatta* on the body of a lady identifies her as a Panjabi. The vermillion mark on the parting of hair on the head signifies that the lady is married and that her husband is well. Greetings and return greetings can take us to definite conclusions about the status and definite descriptions of the persons involved. A householder with a shaven head proclaims death of an elderly relation in the family. As a matter of fact Indians developed a powerful system of symbols which have been studied by many scholars. The Indian deities themselves are an example of symbolisation of many thoughts and notions. The *Jantra-Tantra vidya* presents another study in the field. Symbols are certainly purposeful, they have a notion behind it and a history of their formation. Sure enough among the religious type of people the symbols are in plenty and the Hindus provide a good example of this fact.

Gestures too play an important part in expressing meaning. We have poets who through the language of gesture have done wonderfully well. We have, for example, the poet Bihari whose heroine is so well an expert in the language of the eye that the poet remarks that the lover and the beloved are doing their amorous talk in the house which is full of people. There are many devices of the figurative types where we do not mention the actual things but use certain symbols to indicate their qualities. The bodily parts of a beautiful woman are indicated by means of serpents (hair), parrot (nose), elephant (movement), banana stem (thigh), pomegranate (teeth), flask (neck), lotus (face, eyes, hands, feet, etc.), coconut (breast), lotus trunk (waist). In the same way, some objects are used to indicate numbers. The common practice is to use moon for one, eyes for two, *gunas* for three, directions for four, *rasa* for six, *rishis* for seven, *vasu* for eight, *graha* or stars for nine and so on. It is found in many of the older texts that the dates of composition etc., are given in this way. For 1257 it would be said "*muni sara drug sasi samaya me*" : *muni* 7, *sara* 5, *drug* 2, *sasi* 1 and figures move in the reverse way and therefore the date indicated is 1 2 5 7.

The compositions of some of the Hindi mystic poets are full of symbolism. Kabir in one of his verses says (Kabir has written plenty of symbolic poems and is known for his quality) '*Ramaiya ki Dulhin loota bazar*" which actualy means illusion has plundered the whole world though the words mean the wife of Rama has plundered the market place. Or at another place he says '*naiya bich nadia dubi jaya*' the river is drowning in the boat which actually means the soul is being polluted in small activities. Jayasi, another mystic, in a different way being a sufi, has told the entire story of Padmavati and Ratansen in a very figurative way wherein all the persons appearing in the story are given a figurative explanation and the story is about the attainment of the supreme being by the soul. The poet mentions this phenomenon at the close of the story when he says the heart is the town of Singhal, Padmini is the mind, Nagmati is worldly allusion, Raghava is the evil messenger, Allaudin is *maya* and so on. The story of Ratansen attempting to get Padmavati, inspite of all difficulties in several stages, is the process of the soul attaining the supreme through passing all the stages of attainment. In Indian life there are many other symbols telling different sorts of notions. The *Swastika* and *Om*, the different idols of puranic deities, the vehicles of these deities, the arms used by them like the *trisula*, the club, the wheel, the animals appearing in dreams such as boar, deer, moon, dog, parrot, etc., some political symbols like the national flag, the congress flag, the election symbols, the incarnations of Lord Vishnu, the forms of the Devanagari characters, the puranic stories of Kalia, the Govardhan hill and the like.

I may also mention the Indian gestures of *mudras* and *āsanas* and the gestures made with the neck, the feet, the hands, the fingers and other parts of the body in various designs of bodily activity. For example we have the *abhayamudra*, a posture of the hand with an extended upraised open palm indicating protection from all fears. This posture of the palm I find in many of the statues of Buddha, at the time of seeing holy saints and their processions, including that of the Pope whom I witnessed in this posture at the time of his procession in the Vatican when the initiation ceremony of the Archbishop of Spain was being performed. Several other *mudras* may be mentioned, such as the *Dharmachakramudra* in the teaching posture of Lord Buddha, the *Dhyanamudra*, the *Vitarkamudra*, the *Anjalimudra*, the *Varadamudra*, the *Karmamudra*, the *Visamayamudra*, the *Tarjanimudra*, the *Katakahastamudra*. All these are gestures of the hand and the fingers and are so very well depicted in the old statues found all over India. In the same way we have a long list of eighty-four *āsanas* which on the one hand are associated with the Indian Yogic exercises and on the other with different type of sex play. The Yogic *āsanas* used by saints for postures of sitting, standing or lying for the purpose of worship are well known. Some of them are *Virāsana*, *Vajrāsana*, *Sukhāsana*, *Paryankāsana* and *Lalitāsana*. Besides, we have *Abhanga*, *Dvibhanga*, *Tribhanga* and the

Atibhanga. All these are different ways of expressing certain specific notions and are used for attaining some specific results.

When we look at the Indian dances we see a variety of ways of movements of several parts of the body. There are the classical dances like the Kathakali, the Manipuri, the Bharatanatyam, the Kuchchipudi. In these we find that the poses of the hands in various *mudras*, the neck movements and jerks of different types, the bending of the body in several directions and in a variety of ways. The quick, soft and slow movements are used to depict certain themes or to tell some facts. The Kathakali, for example tells a full story by movements. It is a story-telling dance and is supposed to have been acquired by men from the gods and the goddesses. It can depict battles, love-making, stories of several types, the dance of a snake or of a peacock, the court scenes, the duels in the royal arena, the drinking of several types of liquors, the appearance of a royal personage; sometimes the dance continues for several days, each day telling some part of a long story, like the story of the Ramayana or the story told by Kalidasa in his dramatic treatise, the Shakuntala. The Bharatanatyam is full of sentimentalism and can be best seen in the *Tandava* and the *Lasya* dances.

Semiotics is acquiring new dimensions as is evident from vast area it covers in the international meets. Last year the Viennese Symposium established the truth of this statement. Professor Eco spoke about the four parameters of semiotics—recognition, ostension, replica and invention. He laid down his theory in the act of revealing meaning. Recognition is that of imprints and symptoms, ostension is by providing examples, samples and illustrations, replica is the stylization and combination of the units and invention is the projection of meaning. He gave a good answer to my query about the dance movements of feet, hands, fingers, muscles, eyes, eyebrows, neck and the whole face as to how they attempt to convey meaning. Borbe a young semiotician of Austria and the present president of the 2nd World Congress of Semiotics made a good analysis of signs and their evaluation. Medical men are also in the field. A retired doctor Uexkull raised a question about the terminology used in the science. He said it is a background product of medicine for it lays emphasis on the symptoms present. Poyatos of Canada brought out several aspects of the science in his long essay running into 28 pages. For semiotics of culture he suggested that culture as such is a very big topic, and semiotics should be applied to shorter units. The Italian Professor Rossi-Landi began by calling semiotics as the theory of sign residues. He had a good contact with Charles Morris, the father of modern semiotics. He laid emphasis on the social phenomena of semiotics in the same way as in the case of linguistics, for both tend to bring out some meaning to the social units. The signs may be from human or non-human units but they involve physical and biological efforts. They are intended to communicate some message. Nowakoshiva pointed out that signs symbols as they are employed in semiotics reveal culture. There is a definite relation between objects or signs to the intended message. She gave several well-formed formulae establishing relation of sign and message. The Hungarian scholar Hoppal gave a good exposition of the cultural semiotics about which I shall speak later. He with his colleague Voigt made good contribution to the proceedings. A poem, also can be studied semiotically was the conviction of Laferriere. Some applied it to the biological signs and some took it to the field of sex how the organs there convey different meanings of great significance in the social life. The great scholar Sebeok related the history of the science and described the part played by several philosophers and biologists in the domain of semiotics. He said that semiotics has such a wide field that so many of natural, physical ethical disciplines come into its play. He often quoted Morris and Firth (my teacher at the SOAS). Krampen talked about naive semiotics and Shapiro dwelt on its literary implementation. Such was the wide range which the science has acquired and is being worked out.

Of late a tendency has grown in the domain of semiotics to emphasise the comparative study of semiotics and thus to bring the cultural and other activities of different people together. For example the notification of the 2nd International Semiotic Congress says, "Emphasis will be laid neither on unapplied theory nor a theoretical description but on the development of theoretically relevant results on the basis of given sign processes, the integration of given theoretical conceptions into the empirical analysis of specific sign process and the comparision of sign processes in different domains". So on the one hand it is a comparative study of the signs in different domains of the same area and on the other hand a study of different countries in the same domain. And undoubtedly such a study will be very useful in bringing things together and establishing a relationship on the basis of certain automatic activities of human beings in different fields and areas. Surely it needs good contacts.

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To my mind semiotics is a way of interpretation, a device of communication, a facility for creating greater emphasis, an invention for novelty, a design to keep up your secrecy, a way to make your message more effective, sometimes to make things followed by larger number of people, a method for making the communication of universal appeal and so on. It may possibly have been of much greater importance in the beginning of creation when language was lacking. In older civilisations it got greater appeal. All know about the cosmic dance of Lord Shiva and how the different postures of his body have been tried to be explained by some of the very proficient Indologists. This dance has become an institution in itself and very much has been said about it. Sure enough dances have a great communicative value. The language of gestures has its own significance. The Indian dance and other items of art in India have been interpreted by several foreign scholars as well. Zimmer is a good name who but for his early untimely death might have contributed a lot in this connection. His book on the symbolic interpretation of Indian art and civilisation deserves great admiration. I may also add here the gestures made by the hand at the time of reciting Vedic texts. Similarly the singers make a lot of gestures with their hands and face, so much so that though sometimes we do not understand the lines, we do follow the general trend of the sung material. The postures of the Hindu *sandhya* and the Muslim *namaz* have their own importance and a good book on these items can bring out the significance of making all those physical acts during the worshipping process. It also reveals very clearly the fact that mere language is not supposed to be sufficient even for religious acts, some sort of prescribed signs and gestures are needed to make the act of worshipping complete and effective.

CULTURE

Culture is a term very often used in all human activities. If the present human species has no culture it does not deserve to be called so. As a matter of fact culture is an outcome of the habits owned by a society. In our country culture has a more dignified connotation than the one laid down by western scholars. Fernando Poyatos says, "If we consider culture as a series of habits shared by members of a community, learned but biologically conditioned, such as the means of communication like the basic element of language, social relations at different levels, the various activities of daily life, the products of that community and how they are utilised, the peculiar manifestations of both individual and national personalities in their cultural context, its pattern and prohibitions, and their ideas concerning their own existence and their fellow men; if we think of culture in these terms, we realise that culture is made of a complex mesh of behaviour, and of the active or static results of those behaviours."

Some cultural analysts have invented the term cultureme and call it a unit of culture analysis. Adopting the linguistic structure, as has been done in some fields of kinesics—kines, kinemes—kinemorphemesit is thought to be a confusing study. Hall has suggested three cultural units—isolates, sets and patterns. Poyatos called the unit a cultureme and has defined it as any portion of cultural activity sensorially or intellectually apprehended in signs of symbolic value, which can be divided up into smaller units or amalgamated into larger ones. This analysis of a culture through its culturemes consists of several phases or stages, through which a progressive analysis is carried out from a broader view of culture to an exhaustive and minute study of features. Some four phases have been adopted for this analysis.

Phase one : Any systematic observation of man must take into account his environment for most cultural patterns are not the same as in the rural one. This phase has four zones—urban exterior, urban interior, rural exterior and rural interior—consisting of four basic culturemes.

Phase two : Of the four basic zones there are two large subdivisions of each—human and non-human. Thus these become eight culturemes.

Phase three : It breaks down each primary cultureme into as many settings as we can find in a given culture for individual study. It may be the home, the church, the school, the restaurant, the public square, a public get together and so on. In order to carry out a minute analysis of eye contact at the table between upper class hosts and middle class guests, the urban-interior human behaviour of these two groups in the home is the setting of secondary culturemes. It is at this level of secondary culturemes that we begin to identify certain interrelationship among different cultural systems and subsystems.

Phase four : In this progressive probing of cultural layers in search of signs we must not forget that we are carrying out a semiotic exploration—is a breakdown of each secondary cultureme into smaller units. Culturemes in this phase are tertiary culturemes and here the sensorial—intellectual approach allows for an even more systematic classification because each sensorial or intellectual compartment is analysed as a separate unit.

This is one of the several methods how culture is analysed but we should have an exact idea what culture is according to eastern and western thinkers. Culture according to western thinkers is the sum total of the habits and acts of a particular society. They consider in their own way that the function of culture is some type of social behaviour under given conditions and a set atmosphere. According to eastern thinkers and Indian saints specially culture is the part of the internal self of an individual. His personality is supposed to imbibe certain basic elements which go to make up the individual culture and on that basis the culture of a social unit in which an individual thrives. Thus culture is related to the innermost self of the society and is a part and parcel of the sum and substance of a society. Religion, therefore, is a significant part of Indian culture. The Indian philosophical thoughts also reveal some aspects of the Indian culture. We may say that whereas the European conception is confined to outside behaviour the Indian conception is much too deep and carries with it the innermost being of a personality. It is an inward conviction which reveals itself in outward bahaviour; it is a part of the very self and the individual cannot be separated from his cultural peculiarities. Bauman, while speaking of culture remarks that when the modern social scientists speak about the function of a cultural pattern, norm, custom or institution, they usually have in mind the satisfying of some individual or collective needs. Our conception of a cultural function is entirely different; our culture is the way of attaining some superior objectives and finally the supreme bliss which is at the root of all our activity—mental, physical or otherwise. Culture to a westerner forms part of a particular sort of civilisation of outward conduct but to an Indian it is an integral part of his final attainments and success in his main achievements.

Culture, in India, has been elaborately studied and some aspects of its significance have been brought out. '*Sanskrti*' as it is called contains several items in it. It is closely related to the four *Varnas* and the four *Āsramas* or the stages of life—the stages of celibacy, householder, going away from the household and leaving worldly affairs entirely. It contains in it an all over idea of life and aims at the good of all others. It says that the functions of an individual are not confined to the doer only but the society as such is also involved, perhaps the entire cosmos is affected by individual acts. This has made the Indian idea of culture rather of a mysterious type. The elements of worship are specially determined, and so far as actions are concerned they should be without any expectations—work is thy concern and not its result. *Yajñas*—great *yajñas* and religious austerities—are included in it. There is no question of any rivalry or collision in the Indian culture; all are free to do their own jobs. But it has an emphasis on the purity and impurity of things and ideas and also a feeling of touchability or otherwise. However, it does not apply to despise human beings for it looks to the good and well-being of all living beings. Of course it believes in the transmigration of the soul and the effect of actions on the future life of persons. Elderly people deserve our respect and assistance and they are to be adored like gods. The womenfolk are also worthy of consideration and they deserve a position in society which is rather emulating. There is no sense of despise anywhere. On the other hand the conception of universal brotherhood is to be respected; the entire world is like a big family of which God is the head. Guests are to be given a special consideration. We aim at our progress not only in this world but in the other world as well because we in India believe in a life after the present one. The ultimate aim to which all our efforts are directed is the attainment of that supreme being which has given us life and with whose grace we thrive in this world. Attaining divinity has been the first motto in Indian life. It was also aimed that the form of administration should be in accordance with the main items of Indian culture and civilisation. Such an organisation which allows Indian culture to grow should be partly worldly and partly divine. We have always cared not to anger the supernatural powers but to earn their compassion through good actions and consideration to all. Another feature of the Indian culture is to adhere to the sixteen ceremonies called *samskaras*; a description of these sixteen ceremonies will be given later because they have been observed in Braj as well.

The Sankaracharya of Badrikasrama has pointed out the sixteen main principles of the Indian culture. He being a saint of high order is worthy of great respect by the Indian population and his word is regarded as law. He begins that the first point of Indian culture is a code of conduct according to religious concepts. He then passes on to actions which take the doer towards the inner self; the outer life is not of much importance to devoted Indians. Emphasis on castes and stages of life is laid by him also because they say that without *Varna* and *Āsrama* we cannot get a true conception of Indian life. For the woman it is obligatory to lead a virtuous life that is devotion to her husband. It is also insisted that just as the wife should have perfect devotion to her husband the ideal of a husband should be to have all his attention diverted to his wife. It lays stress on having faith in the celestial life, alongwith devotion to God, incarnations of Lord Vishnu and minor deities. There is provision of observing *Yogic* practices, devotion to the lord and his worship. For devotion and worship several gods and minor deities are included. Apart from devotion to supernatural powers we have to give our respect to divine texts, as they are called, like the Vedas and the Puranas. The Hindu culture believes in the theory of actions of which the great book is the *Gita* which is supposed to be the word of the Lord and which has served to illuminate many a religious and sociological convictions. The worship may be of the idols of gods or those of the representations of several incarnations or it may be the worship of the formless God—the *Saguna* and the *Nirguna* as the two forms of worship are known. Both are admissible in the Hindu culture. I may also add here that the term Indian as I have used in this essay is the same as the term Hindu. The ultimate aim of this life and all our activity is the attainment of final emanicipation. But it has also been suggested by some other thinkers that this world can also serve the purpose if we consider this universe itself as true and try to fulfil our desires through this world itself; ofcourse, we have to accept the fact that this world itself is the manifestation of the Lord and through this world we are attaching ourselves to Him.

Several modern scholars from India have tried to define the term Culture. C. Rajgopalachari says that the ideas, speaking and actions in the well-formulated people of a nation is its culture. And he also says that Hindu culture is Indian culture and Indian culture is the culture of the entire world. It may be an exaggeration but it goes without any argument that Indian culture occupies a very important place in world culture. Sampurnanand, another Indian scholar, regards culture as an internal attainment and points out the amount of great time that is needed to imbibe it. To him civilisation is an external process and is readily possible.

It will not be out of place to consider the views of some other Indian thinkers at this place because that will be helpful in getting a good idea of culture and specially Indian culture. Vasudeva Sharan Agrawal, a good thinker of Indian philosophy has brought out a twenty point analysis of Indian culture. He begins by saying that religion, life and culture go together. There is unification not only in these three important facets of life but in all other spheres of human activity. Without the spirit of unification Indian culture cannot exist. Tolerance is the next quality with which Indian culture is embellished. Recognition of unity in diversity is another factor of Indian culture. The Hindu culture is not afraid of struggles; it faces them calmly and retains its individuality. Independence of all types – religion, society and individual—are guarenteed in this culture. No force of any type is to be exercised in any field of conviction or personal choice. A comparative evaluation of the living and non-living is permissible in the practical field, though the ideal evaluation will be equality of evaluation for all living, non-living, human, non-human, etc. The final attainment is certainly the all supreme spirit. No importance is given to worldly joys, for they are regarded small, insignificant, limited and short-lived. In an organised life of dignity we have to give due regard to literature, art and aesthetics. No real cultured life in this world is possible without these finer elements. We have to strike a good balance between life and religion. Certain restrictions in life are essential for our existence; we have to adhere to them but always attempt to rise higher to attain our real aim. A real upward march ensures our spiritual uplift and that is real advancement. Emphasis on action is there but action separated from religion takes us back, may be for damnation. But for a living being action is necessary and this action should be a thoughtful application with the notion that it is enjoying religious piety as well. We are not to be statisfied with our worldly progress for that is not the real progress. Our success lies in spiritual progress which takes us on the real attainment of a progressive type. A Hindu has to regulate himself on the lines of Hindu culture and embody the qualities of generosity, tolerance, novelty, discipline, selflessness, strong mindedness, high aspirations and ideals and qualities of this type.

Another scholar says that the real Hindu culture lies in the idea that a Hindu always looks to the good of others, he desires happiness to all, he wishes happiness with progress without an iota of any harm or trouble to him. He believes in self-purification, dispelling of his vices, control on his selfishness and a practical outlook on things concerning the world. Others have included in it a celibate life, respect to the womenfolk, optimism, organised life, simplicity of living, peaceful life, observance of the festivals and rituals worship of the deities, purity of all types – of actions, of thinking, body and soul.

It seems that for putting down the main principles of the Hindu culture apart from the points that distinguishes Hindu culture all the points that carry goodness with it have also been added. As some one has put down in brief that the Hindu culture means respect to all—specially to elders, wishing good to others, talking nicely in society and in privacy, hospitality, wearing a good dress, having a pure demeanour, a courteous behaviour, speaking the truth, performing daily duties with nicety, having good qualities and a blameless character. These are such points which are to be found in all good and cultured people but we have to divert our attention to all such points as distinguish the one culture from the others and among them we have several points as pointed out earlier. These may be once again be iterated. Greater importance is attached to the soul and the other world than the present body and the visible world. Belief in the immortality of the soul, consideration of the four castes and the four stages of life, belief in the other world and the transmigration of the soul, incarnations of the Lord, forms of worship including the worship of image and the formless, observance of the sixteen ceremonies concerning the life of a man, place of non-human entities in our outlook, place assigned to women, the wearing of *sikha* on head and the sacred thread, performance of the *yajñas* and *shraddhas*, place of God and religion in life, and so on. These with other attributes form the sum and substance of Hindu culture which has been having a type of universal character among all the Hindus all over the world. Of course we may find some deviations of a minor nature but that is to be allowed on grounds of geography and particular circumstances present. Broadly speaking the Hindu culture is of the same type everywhere. And the Braj culture is no exception, though on a closer inspection we may find certain things which are peculiar to the culture of the Braj area.

There is a special mention of certain things which are regarded as the cultural treasure, among which the holy places such as temples, *maths*, *gaddis*, tombs of saints, *rāsalīla* enclosures, places of some religious occurences and memorials, enjoy special attention, Old objects such as paintings, idols, worship articles, places concerning the saints religious preceptors and *pujāris*, *ghāts*, traditions, traditional rituals, trees and vegetal symbols and remains are also to be included. When we shall take up the Braj culture, these things will form subjects of special study and their semiotics will have to be searched out in that context.

2

BRAJ CULTURE

India has certain well-marked parts which can be well-noted and differentiated for their specific culture and Braj is one such distinguished area. Along with it, in Uttar Pradesh we have another such area which is called Awadh and the two can well be compared and contrasted for their specific cultures. Of course to some, the distinguishing features of the two will be the two incarnations of Lord Vishnu and the two dialects of Hindi associated with them, but besides these there are many other features of a notable nature. Speaking about Braj we have to note some points which have moulded its culture. Braj is a part of India where Lord Krishna was born and where the river Yamuna flows. It is a land where keeping the cow is not only a duty but a profession, a land where there are a number of sects belonging to the Krishna cult and where we find almost everywhere something related to the Lord. Here the supreme deity tended cow and played with his playmates. This is the place which is related with the immortal love and the most pious accounts of the play and frolic of Radha and Krishna—a love which is divine, unknown in the annals of the world—a name which is the very life and spirit of the people of this area and of all those persons who are attached devotionally to this area of Krishna and Radha. Consequently the culture that originated in this area revolves round the personality of this great figure in the religious annals of our civilisation. Krishna has been known from time immemorial all over the world, and in recent times this name has attained new dimensions, through the popularly known Hare Krishna Movement. In fact the International Society of Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) was founded by the Gaudiya saint A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami who established Krishna temples all over the world and where the worship inside the temples is performed with all its details and devotion. I have been to some of the temples outside India also and I find that the same attention is paid to the worship formalities as one notices in the Krishna-Balarama temple situated in Vrindaban. Naturally this has led to the spread of the Braj culture over long and distant areas.

About the Braj culture several scholars have made a number of attempts and it is satisfying to note that all these efforts in the field have been nicely incorporated by Prabhudayal Mital in his book about the Braj culture. He has not only read all those books but has himself experienced the cultural life of the area. In the fifth chapter of his book he has taken up the culture of Braj and dealt with the topic in some details. I do not think it useful to enter into the details of the history and geography of this area, nor do I think that a description of the flora and fauna will serve any useful purpose. It is well-known that Braj is situated around Mathura, the birth place of Lord Krishna and that its boundry is well-marked by the *Brajyātra* route of 84 *kroshas* which *yātra* has become so well-known all over India and also in some of the European countries, for example in the Netherland where at the University of Groningen the Indological department under the directorship of Professor Dr. Jacob Ensink has developed a team of workers for working on the pilgrimages of India including that of the Braj. It was their deep interest in the Braj that invited me to deliver lectures on the *Brajyātra* and the feasts and festivities of the land. We need to know this much of the historical background that there ruled a tyrant with the name of Kamsa who usurped the throne of his father and who threw his relations into prison. The land, then, was called Shaurasena and the language spoken in the area called Shauraseni prakrit and later Shauraseni Apabhramsa from which the present Brajbhasha has developed.

Culture, as already explained, includes in itself the thinking, imagining, mode of living and behaving, the code of conduct, the language of use and its literature, the development of arts and crafts—almost everything that concerns mental and intellectual development of a society. We have to employ this criteria while dealing with the culture of a definite part.

While talking of the Braj culture we are immediately reminded that it is a regional culture, although the Braj culture covered and even now covers a large and extensive area but its regional nature cannot be denied. The main cause for its extension to far off lands and extensive areas is the devotion to Lord Krishna and the sects attached to it which spread over vast areas in India and abroad. Apart from its individual importance the culture of the Braj has influenced the culture of India substantially. But all this culture centres round the figure and worship of Krishna. When we trace down the salient features of the Braj culture we find that like other cultures it is also a composite culture. It has received its inspiration from the Aryan culture and the holy texts which are at the basis of all types of Indian cultures. Non-Aryan features are also included like the worship of the serpents and non-Aryan deities. Jainism and Buddhism have also played their roles in adding to it *viz.* kindness to animals, the institution of fasts and some rituals. The people who came to India and settled in the north, including the Muslims, have contributed to the development of the culture of Braj. Thus on an analysis we find that it is as composite a culture as any other in India with the difference that it has always excercised a wider appeal and has created a greater influence.

As already stated the culture of Braj is built around the personality of Krishna. If we, for a moment take out Krishna from this culture it is certain that the entire Braj culture will collapse. The several sects which form an important part of the Braj culture developed round the devotional attitude towards Krishna who was viewed in different aspects by the formulators and promotors of the number of sects that grew in this part and spread from here in all directions of the country. As with the personality of Krishna so also with the sects of the Krishna cult the culture of this part has the most intimate relation and there remains little, if we take out the Krishna Bhakti from the land of Krishna. Braj culture is a generous and elastic culture and we find that it yielded to several influences and absorbed lot of other materials with which it came into contact. It is a surprising fact that inspite of so much opposition against the religious ideas of this cult, it remained firm like a rock, only accepting certain notions of the opposing forces. It was of such a pleasing nature and embalming effect that not only Hindus but several devoted Muslims were engulfed in its charm and now a large number of foreign Christians have come under its spell. One thing may be noted is that the Krishna cult is very docile and elastic; it has a place for any one who, inspite of all his peculiarities, shows his affection to the central figure and it is a well established fact that the main cause of the foreign devotees is the individual charm and unique fascination of Krishna. Among the poets of this cult and the devotees of this great movement, there are important non-Hindu names.

The five fundamentals of the culture are bound with the five 'S's, namely *Seva* (service), *Sauharda* (friendliness), *Sneha* (affection), *Samarpana* (dedication) and *Samānvaya* (equalisation). Service, in fact, is at the root of all good civilisations and cultural units. If service is denied the culture becomes repelling. Friendliness is seen in a very intimate relationship; we have the cowherd boys and their playfulness with no sense of inferiority among the crowd. Krishna was very fond of all his mates and he really enjoyed their company in the forest, while grazing the cows, or at the midday time while taking their frugal rural food together, or while engaging in acts of mischief, for which Krishna was so well-known but which was just a sign of his fondness to the people, he mixed with them without distinction of caste or creed, sex or age, richness or poverty. The all pervading love and deep mutual relationship founded on affection forms a distinct feeling of the Braj life. The *Gopis* considered Krishna as their own child, their own friend; and so did the *Gopas*. Nanda, the head of the cowherds in that part is always seen having a perfect sense of love and affection to all those who live about him and who consider Nanda as their lord. From the episodes in the *Shrimad Bhagavata* and other such texts namely the *Puranas* we find the spirit of dedication among the Braj people. They have lifted themselves up from all selfish considerations and led a dedicated life, dedicated to the good cause and to the common interests. The *Govardhana* episode provides a good example of this spirit. Equalisation or unification is at the root of all our fellow-feelings. In Braj this spirit was visible at all stages of life. There were no complexes—all behaved, all acted and all worked to keep up things together. In our acts we have to exercise this spirit and in our solutions we have to keep our attention to it. To my mind a type of unification or connected sequence is the way of life and we have to admit that for a long time this idea of living formed a special feature of the Braj life. I am prepared to admit that conditions have changed now and even in the most simple life of the Braj, things of a complex type have entered taking away many of the sterling qualities for which the Braj life was known all over. But there are remains of the glorious past and I am concerned with that part of the Braj life which we find in manuscripts written in the last centuries.

Apart from the great personality of Krishna, the Braj life centres round five 'G's also : they are *go*, *gopa*, *gopi*, *gokula* and *goshṭha*. *Go* is in the sense of the cows; the Braj culture is woven round the possession of cows which is the wealth of the people there and which is the only profession to be found among all the people. The man looks after the upkeep of the cows; the women do so many things with the milk that is taken out mostly by men, and the young boys are sent to the pastures to tend the cows throughout the day and bring them back in the evening. The men who devote their attention to the cows are really the *Gopas* and the women who have to do so much with the milk of the cow and who look after the *Gopas* are rightly called *Gopis*. The place where they live is *Gokula* which denotes once again the importance of the cows. Though *Gokula* is the name of a particular place, the reason behind the place being so called is significant. *Goshṭha* is the enclosure for keeping the cows and if the cows are so very important the enclosues are also important. Thus some people call the culture of the Braj as the culture of the five '*Ga*'*s*; or, we may in other words call it pastoral culture which may protray all its simplicity and unity but which is averse to complexities of life or any sort of affectedness. This characteristic of the Braj culture, I think, continues even now for the *Brajwasis* are considered simple people in their living habits and their behaviour to others. Braj culture may rightly be attributed with the qualities of being simple, harmless, and useful to others. It is, at once, soft, sweet and supporting. It is undoubtedly gifted with the quality of being of an extensive nature, full of peace and humility, natural and undogmatic. People have been moved with the easy nature of this culture and they have found it full of mirth and joys of a harmless nature. It has the feeling of selfless devotion, unstinted sense of service to humanity and results in a kind of bliss which marks its superiority over other cultures of the land. The various aspects of the life and acts of Lord Krishna have given it a charm which survives all the atrocities of human troubles and complexities. We must not forget the fact that the Braj culture has proved as the great asset for human needs not only in this world but in the world to which pious people look forward. We can get good glimpses of this culture in the modes of worship prevalent on a wide scale in the area. The worship performed by the Vallabha cult brings in all the fondness for the child and the Nimbārkas provide the subtleness of real love and a conjugal life. The Rādhavallabhis bring the true spirit of devotion as also do the Haridasis.

One feature of the Braj culture is that it has got an outer form in the art and literature of the area. The outward manifestation of the culture is a sure device of knowing and understanding it fully. As was pointed out with regard to the forms of worship we can say with equal confidence that the various pieces of art and literary production have clearly shown the true nature of the culture and it was on that assumption that the subject of this project was chosen to find the nature of the Braj culture based on the works of the poets devoted to the Krishna cult. Side by side, we have pithy sayings prevalent in the area and these provide indications of the culture of the land. Besides we have to direct our attention to the religious acts of the area. The temples, feasts, festivals, folk-gatherings, songs and public functions supply us with the real spirit of the Braj culture. More examples can be found if we accompany a *Brajyātra* or attend a *Rāsalīla*. They present fine examples of the folk-life and treat life on the real level. In short we can say that in the Braj there is enough material to give a real insight into the culture and bring out its specialities in a visible way. No amount of imagination or philosophical deliberations are needed for an estimation.

For estimating the nature and peculiarities of the Braj culture we have to turn to its fine and other types of arts. Architecture and sculpture provide plenty of material to indicate how the culture developed in several stages. A look in the

Mathura Museum will give us an idea what the Braj culture has been and how it has taken its present shape. So are the paintings and miniatures found in the temples and museums. Even the *pichhvahi*—the painted cloth behind the main idol has its own tale to tell. The particular type of the music that developed in the temples and among people in the form of folk-music throw plenty of light on the culture of this place. I am reminded of the peculiar folk songs in the form of the *rasia* or *lāvaṇi* which not only tell the cultural details but also by their special way of chanting bring out certain special features of the population. As the *kajari* of the east so also the *rasia* of Braj even now sung on an extensive scale is a revelation of the spirit with which it thrives or palpitates. The Braj dances by the women and the dances of the *gopas* in their congregations reveal some traits of the character. The dance while performing the *rāsalīla* is of a different type and lends colour to the entire atmosphere because that is related to the presiding deity of Braj and all our activities have been coloured by this special incarnation of lord Vishnu. We shall give more attention to *rāsalīla* later on. Then there are other arts. For example the art of dressing and that of putting on ornaments by men and women on the various parts of body. Dresses and ornaments differ from place to place for they cater to the special needs of the respective population. For example the use of the peacock feather as piece of decoration on the head of Krishna tells the story that Krishna is a cowherd boy and that the peacock is a bird found in plenty in the area. The decorations of the household and preparation of meals are also peculiar in the Braj area. The articles of food served abound in preparations of milk or those for which a milk preparation is needed. *Rābari* is one such item for it is taken either with milk or with sourmilk or buttermilk. Very rarely we meet this item of food elsewhere. Food habits relate to the conditions of the place.

Braj is in the north India, very near the capital towns of Delhi and Agra which were the places where the Muslims had their seats of administration. The *jhanga*, for example, which is worn by Krishna or which was used to be put on in earlier times by the bridgegrooms is a borrowing from the Muslim chiefs. It continues, without any exception, as the dress in which our *rāsalīla* Krishna appears before us and is worshipped as the God himself. It is a Muslim dress, but nobody has raised any objection to it, because it denotes superiority of the person wearing it; so also must have been the case with the bridgegroom; and it is very natural too, for we cannot escape the civilisation or the culture around us. Apart from *jama* or *jhanga*, we see the effect of the Muslim dress in the *mirjai* which is so to say a mini *angarkha*, we have also the dress for the legs—*payjama*—which is also used by Krishna and the bridegrooms. This was very often being used by the higher type of Braj people but it did not become so very popular among the *Brajwasis*. But the *pataka* and *kamarband* were as often followed with the dress, as the other items of the Muslim dress. But dresses like the *lungi* or *tehmat* were never put on because they were thought to be rather indecent for a civilised dress.

There were, and some of them are, certain items indicative of certain ideas. A gold bangle in the leg was an indication of royal recognition of superiority. A *borla* on the head, glass bangles on the wrists, *bichua* on the toes, a vermillion mark on the forehead or on the space of hair-parting and a coloured *sāri* were the sure indications that the woman is married and that her husband is living. Even now some of these decorations are put on by women whose husbands are alive; but there are now cases where unmarried girls put on many of these things; of course, I have never found an unmarried girl wearing ornaments on the toes or the vermillion at the parting of the hair. Similarly white sāri is losing its significance for it has become a common fashion with the women but certain signs, symbols and indications do exist to draw a line of difference between the marital status of women. No such signs are found in the case of men. May be man, even in Braj, was allowed to have more than one wife and could remarry a second or a third time with the first wife alive or dead. This practice was not to be found among women, for they had to carry on alone as widows after the death of their husbands. Now, the practice not very frequent and not very adorable, has made its appearance that widows can remarry and put on the articles of a married woman. But such occurences are exceptions rather than general rule and the society does not form a good impression of the remarried women, though there is no bar either by the government or the society to some extent. The ornaments of the toes also indicated the status or the position of a woman. A woman of the princely order could put on gold ornaments on her toes or on her feet, ordinary well-to-do women were seen with silver ornaments and women of a lower status were found with those of baser materials. This used to be a common practice and a distinction could be easily noted. The bar has vanished now.

3

KRISHNA CULT

Braj has a long history of religious sects. Besides the Vedic there fourished Buddhism and Jainism as well, and the Mathura Museum provides a good history of the idols worshipped in this area. But the most important religion that existed in this area is the Krishna cult and its history is so enchanting that it has drawn people from all parts of India, now from all parts of the world, adoring the deity round whom the cult revolves. I always find Braj haunted and frequented by devotees from all over the world among whom the Americans and the Europeans are not less. The worship of Lord Shiva, Devi, Rama and Hanuman are also very common and some local deities like Bhumia, Serh, Sitalamai have also developed.

Vaishnavism, to begin with, had four important divisions—the Shri sect, the Rudra sect, the Sanakadi sect and the Brahma sect. From these there grew many of the modern sects which are thriving in the Braj. The Shri sect owes its origin to Ramanujacharya and believed in the special type of non-dualism. It aims in attaining the feet of the lord and came to Braj from the South. The old seat of the sect is to be found in Govardhan; from this developed the Ramanandi sect which also had good followers in the Braj. The Rudra sect was propagated by Vishnu Swami. It believed in pure non-dualism and it developed well in the later Vallabha sect. It had a good following in the area and the well-known temple of Bihariji in Vrindaban is said to be attached to this sect. The Sanakadi sect was established by the famous Nimbarkacharya. It believes in the dual-non-dualism of the Lord. It is being followed in the Braj in the same form as it took from its originator and there are good many sets of this sect inside and outside the Braj. The fourth important sect is called the Brahma sect and it believes in dualism. It gave greater emphasis on *Bhakti* than on the philosophical principle. Madhwacharya is intimately related to this sect and on its principles Chaitanya founded the Gaudiya sect. Thus we see

1. Shri	Special non-dualism	Ramanujacharya	and Ramanandi also
2. Rudra	pure non-dualism	Vishnu Swami	Vallabha sect
3. Sanakadi	dual-non-dualism	Nimbarkacharya	Nimbārka sect
4. Brahma	dualism	Madhwacharya	Gaudiya sect

the beginning of the Bhakti cult in the Braj area some thousand years back and its development in different shapes and forms from that time onwards.

Braj is the land of temples and religious sects and each moment one is reminded of the part religion plays in the life of the society. For the sake of convenience I shall mention some of the salient points of the various Krishna cults prevailing in the Braj area. I have already listed the original Vaishnava sects and the school which they belonged to. Now I take up the sects which are currently prevalent in this area and the innumerable devotees of Krishna all over the world.

Of the several sects belonging to the Krishna cult, I find the following most important with a good number of followers :

1. The Vallabh sect founded by Goswami Vallabhacharya
2. The Chaitanya sect by Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu
3. The Nimbārka sect founded by Shri Nimbarkacharya and revived by Shri Haivyas
4. The Radhavallabh sect by Hitaharivanshji
5. The Haridasi started by Swami Haridasji

It would prove interesting if I give some description of each of these five sects.

The Vallabh Sect : It is called *'Pushtimarga'* or *'Pushti'* sect. It falls under the original sect named the 'Rudra' sect founded by Vishnu Swami. But it got its present shape through Goswami Vallabhacharyaji who was born in 1478 A.D., and now everywhere the sect the 500 years anniversary is being celebrated. Special programmes are being organised and Commemoration Volumes are being published. The Swami travelled wide and preached the dictates of his sects. Three of his *Yātras* are well-known and in all these three, he visited the Braj area. He is said to be responsible for discovering *Gokula*, the place where the Lord spent his childhood. During that period there was great persecution of the religious Hindus. He used his influence and secured some sort of religious freedom to the Hindus. In the *'Varta'* literature we find the details about him and the commencement of the worship of Shrinathji.

The philosophical aspect of the sect is based on what is known as 'pure dualism'—*Shuddhādwaitavāda*. This in a practical shape turned out to be the *'pushti marga'* which believed in the grace of God and complete surrender to His will. It has an elaborate system of worship where the child deity is worshipped eight times a day : 1. *Mangala*—the early morning ceremony, 2. *Shringar* when the diety is properly decorated, 3. *Gwal*—the diety meets his playmates the cowherd boys, 4. *Rajbhog* when food is served to the child god in a dignified way, 5. *Utthapan*—this being the afternoon getting up, 6. *Bhog*, when lighter meals are served, 7. *Sandhyā-āarti* or the worship with incence of lamps, and 8. *Sayana*—the deity goes to bed. Besides the daily ceremonies there are annual festivals as well of which *Hatari*, *Gowardhan*, *Ācharaya's* birth, *Holi*, *Hindora*, *Sawantij*, *Janmashtami*, etc. are specially celebrated. After taking the *mantradīksha* or initiation into the sect every one becomes authorised to enter the *Bhakti* of the lord. This sect is based on 'love' as the predominent factor from the beginning to the end but it gives importance to the parental love. The *gopībhāva* which adores love to the deity is also recognised.

The *Ācharya* was a good scholar and composed a large number of books, including the *Anubhāshya* on the *Brahmasūtra* in which he propagated the pure non-dualism. During his life time he has a large number of devotees and followers of whom

84 are described in the *Chaurāsi Vaishnavon ki Varta* the story of 84 devotees. He died rather early at the age of 52 and the responsibilities passed on to his eldest son Gopinathji. He lived for short while and after some difficulty his younger brother took up the saintly duties after Gopinathji. This second son is also well-known for he organised the Order well and spent his time mostly in Braj. Several temples were constructed in his period and he was honoured by the Mughal rulers. He too performed several journeys like his father. The establishment of the *Ashtachhap* or the eight super poets of the cult was his work. With his seven sons he established the Seven Houses (*Saptagriha*) and the eighth one called Lalji ka Ghar. All these houses remained attached to Braj but the eighth house had its location in the North-West in Dera Ghazi Khan.

The most famous temples of the sect are : 1. Shrinathji and Navanitapriyaji in Nathdwara, 2. Mathuranathji in Govardhan, 3. Dwarkadhishji in Kankroli, 4. Shri Gokulnathji in Gokul, 5. Gokulachandramaji in Kaman, 6. Kalyanraiji in Vadodra, 7. Balkrishnaji in Surat, 8. Madanmohanji also in Kaman and many of other temples belonging to these all over northern India. The most important places where the sect is still observing its true tenants are Govardhan, Gokul, Mahaban, Mathura, Vrindaban, Kamaban with temples in each place. Round the year some festivals take place—*Yamunājanmotsava*, *Vallabhāchāryajanmotsava*, *Jalayātra*, *Gurupūrnima*, *Pavitra ekadasi*, *Krishnajanmotsava*, *Sanjhi*, *Gocharanotsava*, *Janamotsava* of several *goswamis*, the birthday of Vitthalnathji and *Holikotsava*. It is a sect full of feasts and festivities. At times *Chappanbhog*—a big feast with many items of food is served to the diety. Daily food offered to god is of good quality which is later distributed to the workers in the temple who in their turn sell this food to the devotees who enjoy it with great relish. In any temple of the sect you can be sure of being provided the sacred food if you give information in advance. There is regular selling of the *prasada* as well. Pure materials are used in preparing food to the deity and one is wonderstruck when one sees the great amount of food stuff received from unknown quarters in the name of the diety. Shrinathji in Nathdwara is a good example where you will find wells of oil and ghee and golden and silvery grinding stones for grinding saffron and such stuff. The names of the sender and receiver are both Shrinathji.

In the Braj area there are many important temples of the sect apart from the 11 chief ones situated in several distant places. In Gokul we have the temple of Shri Gopinathji; in Mahaban there are places attributed to Damodaradasji and Govindswamiji; Mathura has the famous temple of Dwarkadhishji as also those of Chote Madanmohanji and Gokulnathji; in Vrindaban there are some seats of the *goswamis*; in Kaman there are two famous temples of Gokulchandramaji and Madanmohanji. Besides there are many places attributed to the *goswamis* in so many places of the Braj including those that fall in the area covered during the *Braj-yātras* of 84 *Kroshas* or about 205 kilometres. *Brajyātra* is an institution by itself and each year it is organised by the *goswamis* for the devotees. The first *yātra* is said to have been performed some four hundred years back and there are records about the *yātra* with regard to the places visited and the ceremonies perfomed. In the course of the pilgrimage there are 12 chief forests, 24 sub-forests, two big ponds, 7 places of Baldeoji, 7 marks of the feet of Shriji, two places of swaminiji, 6 smaller ponds, 7 goddesses, 4 groves of the Kadamba tree, 8 Shivas, 5 hills, 6 places of swinging, 4 well-made tanks, 11 wells, 11 rocks, 7 places of receiving gifts, 5 thrones of the deity, 22 seats of Shri Mahaprabhuji, 9 places of Gosainji and 84 small *kundās*. A well-planned pilgrimage takes place on fixed dates and there are prescribed stops during the course of the pilgrimage.

The literature produced by the *āchāryas* of the sect and the poet devotees is of great interest and in good quantity. It started with Acharya Vallabh who wrote more than a dozen books and the practice was carried on by his son Vitthalnathji and the subsequent *goswamis* in the seven well-founded houses and also the Lalji ka Ghar, the eighth house in the North-West. For compositions in the *Braj bhasha* several names both of Hindus and Muslims, men and women can be taken but the *Ashtachhap* established by Vitthalnathji has great significance. It was headed by the blind poet Surdas who composed the collosal volume *Surasagar* and whose 500 years are being celebrated now all the world over. All the poets among these eight ones were famous poets and their compositions have been praised by the scholars. Muslim poets like Raskhan, lady poets like Mira and Taj are among the best ones. It must be admitted that the literary contribution by the sect of Vallabhacharya is of high order and occupies a prominent place in the history of Hindi literature. The sect has a very good number of followers all over India and the temples carry on the worship-tradition in the orthodox way. It must, however, be admitted that now the *goswamis* are being criticised for their royal living and household.

The Chaitanya Sect : This sect of the Krishna cult originated in Bengal by the inspiring devotion of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu on his being impressed by the superiority of the lord whom he discovered in Braj alongwith the modern discovery of Vrindaban. It is called by several names like—Gaudiya, Madhwagaudeshwar and so on. The founder was a Bengali Brahman born some five hundred and fifty years back. He paid a visit to the Braj and prayed in the places attributed to Lord Krishna. This gave him also an inspiration to revive the past glory of these sacred places and sent his chief deciples for the purpose to Vrindaban. Among these we name with honour the six *goswamis* who are known for their religious and literary ability. They are—Sanatan, Rup, Jiva, Gopal Raghunathdas and Ragunath Bhatta. Krishnadas Kaviraj and Narain Bhatta are also well-known for their devotion and compositions.

While dealing with the philosophical principles of this sect it may be remembered that they were originally initiated into the Madhwa sect; they, therefore, accepted its principles for the sake of providing a philosophical background. As a matter of fact they gave more emphasis to the worship of Lord Krishna and his *Bhakti* than to the principles involved in a sect. Krishna to them is the supermost element in and outside the world and the living being is his permanent servant. Shri Krishna alone is the creator, upholder and organiser of this world. This Nature is the play of Shri Krishna who is all supreme. In all our acts we are guided by the power given by Him. They gave a prominent place to chanting the names of Shri Krishna; infact, the originator of the cult ever forgot himself while doing *Kirtana* or chanting, singing and playing instruments in remembering Krishna. They exercised a soothing influence in doing away with the distinction of high and low. In short Krishna is the uppermost element; Krishna is the fullest incarnation of Vishnu; pure devotion is the best way of salvation; servitude, tranquility, friendliness and sweetness are the various devices for developing *Bhakti*; the *gopikas* of Braj occupy a high place; in *Bhakti* all people belonging to the high or low order of society are equal and able to get freedom from worldly shackles and lastly the *Bhagawata* is the best *shastra* to study and follow.

Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu organised the sect well and appointed able persons for propagating the way of Gaudiya Bhakti. Nityananda and Adwaitacharya carried on the mission in Bengal and the six *goswamis* in the Braj. But the literature produced in Vrindaban is by far the most important to this sect. There were several scholars like Vishwanath Chakravarti, Baldeva Vidyabhushan, Kaviraj Krishnadas, Narottamdas, etc. *Chaitanyacharitāmrita* by Krishnadas Kaviraj and *Chaitanyabhagvat* are two, very important books read with devotion by the followers of the sect. The Gaudiya saints did not produce a commentary on the *Brahmasutra*. There mode of philosophy was known as '*achintyābhedabheda*' which was well explained by Krishnadas Kaviraj in his *Chaitanyacharitāmrita*. But by so doing they could not escape from a commentary for when the Maharaja of Jaipur wanted to know their principles of philosophy and the school to which they belonged they had to present one. It is called the '*Gobindabhashya*' written by a great scholar, the Gaudiya celebrity Baldeva Vidyabhushan.

In the Braj area when I recall my experiences I find that Vrindaban is even now a very important place for the Gaudiya people. A good number of Bengalis live there and some of the others profess this sect. Some of the present followers of the sect are famous for their scholarship—people like Atulkrishna Goswami, Nrisinghvallabh Goswami, Purshottam Goswami, Bishambhar Goswami. Two saints are well-known—one Bhaktihridaya Bon Maharaj, the founder of the College of Oriental Philosophy and the other A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada—the distinguished founder of the International Society of Krishna Consciousness or ISKCON with temples all over the world. They are having a very good institution in Vrindaban with a temple, an International Guest House and a society for the distribution of literature produced by the founder *ācharya*. There are several other temples of the sect in Vrindaban—Madanmohanji obtained by Sanatan Goswami in Mathura, Govind devaji got by Rupa Goswami in Vrindaban. It had a very big temple in Mathura but was partially demolished by muslims and the idol was taken to Jaipur; now there is another temple of Gobind devaji. The three others are — Gopinathji got by Mandhu Pandit in Vrindaban, Shri Radharamanji—the worshipped idol of Gopal Bhatta, and the third Radhadamodarji of Jiva Goswami. The original idols of some of them have gone to Rajasthan—Madanmohanji is in Karauli; Gobindadeva, Gopinath, Radhadamodar, Radhavinoda and Gokulanand in Jaipur. The same happened to some of the Vallabh temples as well; for example Mathureshji was shifted from Braj to the town of Kota. In the Braj many places besides Vrindaban are sacred to the sect, for example Mathura where Chaitanya took his first bath in the holy river Yamuna, Govardhan where in Jatipura we have the Shrinathgopal and the place consecrated to Sanatan and Krishnadas, Radhakund known for a large number of Gaudiya women devotees and the places of worship of several saints and of course so many places in Vrindaban.

So far as scholarship is concerned I find many saints who are devoted scholars well versed in the sectarian literature and producers of literature. But that rigour and that saintliness of devotion is said to be in not a good order. Generally the temples are not so rich as those of the Vallabha sect but the mode of worship continues to be traditional and there have been some attempts at the renovation of temples, etc.

Some of the Gaudiya temples, saints and *pandits* are in possession of a large number of valuable manuscripts. Just, for example, the temple of Radhadamodarji with its main deity in Vrindaban had a good amount of nice literature most of which have now been acquired by the Vrindaban Research Institute, Vrindaban for the purpose of preservation and conservation. But much of this material has been destroyed and is now in a condition of decay needing its acquirement and preservation.

The Nimbarka Sect : It is the Sanakadi sect continuing after the name of its founder, Nimbarkacharya. A great impetus was given to it by Shri Harivyas Deva. It has behind it the philosophy of dual-non-dualism which recognises the fact that *jiva* is different from *Brahma* but as the leaf is from tree, light from fire so is *jiva* from *Brahma*. Thus it embraces both the ideals of dualism and non-dualism. This sect gave much importance to Radha who is said to be the eternal companion on the left side of Shri Krishna. They consider this world as the exhibition of the power of the lord and as such it is as real as *Brahma* for there can be no other existence except *Brahma*. They worship the couple Radha-Krishna. There is also an attempt to imbibe the feeling of being the female companion of Krishna and to realise that Radha and Krishna are always having their playful activities in which their companions perform a great part. This form of eternal play has four factors—Shri Krishna himself, the ever pleasing power Radha, the companions and the fourth the Vrindaban—celestial abode of the Lord.

Shri Harivyas Deva who gave it a new vigour is as old as the founders of the two previous sects. A little less than five hundred years ago he was born in Mathura. His *Mahavani* is a recognised book in *Brajbhasa*; it has five chapters containing five types of happiness—that of Service, encouragement and enthusiasm, love-making, natural and the fifth one being that of principles. After him some people call the sect as Harivyasi sect. He had good many deciples of whom twelve were very prominent—Swabhuji, Vohitji, Madangopalji, Ghamandiji, Bahubaliji, Parushramji, Gopalji, Hrishikeshji, Madhavaji, Keshavaji, Lapar Gopalji and Mukundji. These twelve were responsible for the twelve branches or sub-sects of the main Nimbarka sect. All of them were Gaur Brahmanas of the North. Now each one of these have their own geneology and there are plenty of their followers and temples all over North India. In the Braj area the Salemabad seat is of significance at present and the Shriji Maharaj as the present occupant of the seat excercises a sort of control on the temples belonging to this *gaddi*. Of these temples, the present Shriji temple is very important for it not only is a type of headquarters for the area but it is busy in publishing the sectarian literature and organises functions of several types including literary and cultural ones. During the times of Raja Jaisingh of Jaipur who organised a meeting of all the important religious sects, the Nimbarka sect came into great prominece and it superceded all the other sects. These people also organised a military force to protect the Hindu devotees from the attacks of the Muslim kings and other rulers. It was called the Nimbarkia arena. At that time there were in all 15 such militant organisations and the Nimbarkas played a good part in it.

Shri Vrindaban Deva had a good influence in Rajasthan area. After him came Shri Gobindadevaji in whose time good literature of devotion was produced. Gobindasharan and Sarveshwarsharan followed him and had their influence in Jaipur and the nearby area. Nimbarkasharanji got a good temple made in Amber. He was the person who helped the Jat Raja of Bharatpur when the British invaded the small state. He with his troops gave a stiff fight to the invaders. After Harivyas his followers established their seats in several places but the seat in Salemabad was considered as the most important seat of the sect. Several temples were founded in Braj area—in Govardhan area we have their temples in Nimgaon, Radhakund, Naradakunda, etc; in Vrindaban we have the Shriji Kunj, Topiwalikunj, Nimbarkakota, Vanshivata and the Madhavavilas temple; in Bharatpur we have Bihariji reminding of Nagaji and so on. There are some good scholars as well among wbom the name of Adhikari Brajvallabhsharanji is of importance; Shri Govind Shastri is also making his contribution. Earlier we had a very famous and illustrious poet Gobind or Rasika Gobind from Jaipur who resided all his later days in Vrindaban and produced significant literature including some poetic treatises. He is counted among some of the best *ācharyas* of Hindi poetics.

We cannot say that the sect enjoys as nice a position as in the times of Harivyas or Parusharam or Nagaji but it is doing well comparatively. It has a long tradition and adores the couple Radha and Krishna simultaneously. It got a good impetus from the rulers of Rajasthan and their organisation stood the test of time. The so called Tatti sect also got mixed with it during the times of Maharaja Jaisingh. I find that the sect got great popularity because it does not have that rigour which marks the Vallabha sect, not that sort of provincial character often seen in the Gaudiya. It was founded anew by the Brahmanas of this area and seems more allied to the nature of the land. It got princely patronage also and at one time was almost the only sect of the rulers of Rajasthan who led a large number of people. The worshipping formalities are rather simple and meet the needs of the common people.

The Radhavallabh Sect : It was started by Shri Hita Harivansh who gave the name *Radhavallabh* to the playful couple of Shri Radha-Krishna. The sect was, therefore, called the Radhavallabh sect. The main principle of the devotion in this sect is 'love' which is divine and is denoted by the term '*hita*'. This term *hita* was used as a prefix to the names of *goswamis* of this sect. Although the devotion to both the deities is great but greater is the importance attached to Radha who is the source, flow and sublimation of this great love, flowing both ways. It may be said that the form of worship towards Radha-Krishna propagated by the Nimbarka sect was adopted in it with greater sweetness, love and sentimentalism. His friend and helper Swami Haridas gave him great assistance in the advancement of the sect.

Hita Harivansh was born in the beginning of the 16th century, almost at the same time as the other founders of the Krishna cult sects. He was born in the Braj and for 32 years he spent the life of a householder. But his coming to Vrindaban was a great event in his life and he lent a new importance to this place. The deity he carried was Shri Radhavallabh and he began the worship with greater vigour and enthusiasm. Certain places such as Sevakunj, Rasamandala, Manasarovar and Vamshivat are well-known in the sect. The literature available after the founder consists of two Sanskrit books—*Rādhāsudhānidhi* and *Yamunāsataka*; those in *Brajbhasha* are—*Hitāchaurāsi* and *Vāni*. Besides there are two letters which show the natural affection towards his followers. He married twice and had four sons and a daughter.

The saints who lent support to the work taken up by Harivansh are Swami Haridas, Hariram Vyas and Prabodhanandji. They helped to advance the mission and write several works. The founder did not enter into philosophical discussions about the sect he propagated. He said in *Rādhāsudhānidhi*, that he did not bother about the creater, supporter and destroyer of this world; our main purpose is the devotion to the places of sport where Radha and Krishna are ever in a playful mood. This necessarily established 'love' as the all important aspect of the sect. The principle appears to be very simple but it is not, since love itself is difficult to understand and the sportive love of Radha-Krishna is all the more eluding in which ordinary people are liable to be led astray. The eternal playfulness of the couple is characterised by the presence of the two supreme beings—Radha and Krishna, the presence of the companions and friends and the place Vrindaban which is the ever abode of this eternal sportive activity of the deities. It is often seen that the devotees often sit in a *samaja* and sing from the sacred texts in presence of the deities.

Some literature was produced by the followers of this sect and we may mention the names of Sevakaji, Dhruvadasji, Binduji, Ananyaali, Chandrasakhi, Ruplalji, Vrindabandas, etc. For example Dhruvadas was a prolific writer and is attributed with 42 *lilas* and a large number of *padas*.; so was Ananyaali who wrote 108 *līlas* and the *Svapnavilas;* so was Vrindabandas with large number of *padas*. There are two important terms in the sect—*Bindu* and *Nāda*. Those who are the members of the family of Harivansh and their descendents are *Bindu parivār* and those who belong to the series of followers and deciples are called *Nāda* for they are considered so on the basis of the sound to which they are attached. This created a sort of division also in the sect-places and Rangilalji of Devabana, Radhavallabhji of Vrindaban and Sevakunj are in the possession of the *Bindus* and *Nādas* have the Rasamandal, Mansarovar and the birthplace of Hita Harivansh namely Bada. Both the parties gave their cooperation in establishing the sect well through the medium of Barisarkar and Chotisarkar of *Bindus* and the world-foresaken saints of the *Nādas*.

The sect has several places of religious significance besides the famous temple of Radhavallabhji. In Govardhan and Radhakund there are temples sacred to the sect and the Kaman temple which served the deity during the time of Muslim persecution. Barsana and Bada are the two other places which are sacred due to the birth of Radha and the founder respectively. At present we find that the activities are a little dormant though at the time of the marriage of Radhavallabhji we find great activity and enthusiasm. The legal tussels in which the *goswamis* entangled themselves led to the decay of the sect. But the literature produced has been of great importance. It is a pity that very little of the literature has been published and attempts should be made to bring out the hidden treasures of the sect.

The Haridasi Sect : The music wizard Swami Haridasji is the founder of this sect. They also believe in the eternal sportiveness of Shri Shyama and Shri Kunjabihari. This can be seen only by the female companions of Radha and, therefore, those who desire to have a taste of this bliss have to adopt the same feeling of the female companionship namely the *Sakhībhāva*. Swami Haridas also did not believe in philosophising the sect which he founded. It is called Sākhi sect also and is a way of loving, adoring, attaining bliss and devotion to the activities of the worshipped ones. It is not a sect in that sense but may be regarded as a way of worshipping on the lines of the previous sect. As a matter of fact these two sects are the elaboration of the worship of Shri Radha and Krishna propagated by the Nimbarka saints. Swami Haridas is known for his being a great saint and a reputed musician so much so that the story goes how king Akbar came to Vrindaban in the company of his court musician Tansen and listened to that most sophisticated music from the master. There are two sections among his followers—one attached to the Tatti sect of the *sanyasi* saints and the other of the householder *goswamis* who are in charge of worshipping the famous Bankey Bihariji of Vrindaban. Both these sections have diverse views about the birth, birth place, caste, parents, family, *guru*, sect, date of initiation into the sect, coming to Vrindaban, appearance of Bihariji and the date of his attaining heaven. It is no use to enter into the discussion of the two sections for in most details they almost tally; we have only to note that he came to Vrindaban when a young man of 25 and had left all worldliness. Some years later he got the idol of Bihariji from the place now called Nidhibana and started the worship in the place full of forests and wild vegetation. The services of Hita Harivansh and Haridas in reviving Vrindavan and to give it the present shape as a place of devotion is as much as the one rendered by the founder of the Gaudiya sect.

The two treatises of Swami Haridas—*Siddhanta ke pada* (*Padas* of Principles) and *Kelimalā*—are very important to the sect so much so that they are regarded as great as the vedas and the *shastras*. Some persons have tried to designate the religious principles of Swamiji by calling them 'wishing non-dualism' meaning to interpret non-dualism in the way you likes. But it is no use imposing this 'ism' on the principles of Swami Haridasji who preached no formal principles and regarded them as impediments in the path of real attachment to the deity. According to the 18 *padas* of his principles we may note that he believed in the will of the supreme and we are all in the hands of some other power. There is no greater pleasure than devotion to the Lord which is the primary duty of a human being. The devotee is a sinner and the Lord is all kindness. For a proper guidance devotion to God is best who should be loved as also the company of saints. Leave your lethargy and love God and not to entangle yourself in overworldliness is the motto. All this is the play of the Supreme Being and is therefore not true. Life is very temporary and we should, therefore, utilise all our time in the devotion to God which is like a deep ocean and which can be crossed only with sincerity of purpose and fullness of devotion.

There have been several devotees of this sect who have commanded a good position in the sect and the literature produced in the area. Among these the eight *ācharyas* occupy a significant place. They are Vitthalavipul, Biharindas, Nagaridas, Sarasadas, Narharidas, Rasikadas, Lalitkishoredas and Lalitamohinidas. Vitthalavipul is said to be the ablest on the basis of his devotion and *Brajbhasha* compositions; Biharindas is known for his exposition of literary and sectarian principles. Rasikadasji is responsible for the temple of Rasikabihariji, existing in Vrindaban and is attributed with 8 good books of the sect. Lalitakishori also composed huge amount of literature and Lalitamohandasji is noted for the progress of the Tatti sect or institution. This institution is also well-known in the area and there have been several good saints. The two sections of this sect, the worldly and the world-free could not come together with the result that they did not succeed in doing their best to the life and culture in the area. Of course recently the temple of Bihariji has attained a prominence, second to none, and when one says that he is going to Vrindaban he means he is going to the temple of Bihariji.

This in brief is a description of the five important sects of the *Brajbhumi* which is so to say another name for Vrindaban. These sects can best be seen in Vrindaban, atleast the second, the fourth and the fifth. From here they spread to long distances including Rajasthan which turned out to be a great asset in the propagation of these sects and giving protection to the saints, deities and poets of the sects. Several huge temples were constructed and arrangements were made for the expenses incurred in worshipping the idols. The patronage given was not confined to any one part of Rajasthan but throughout the big State we find ample proof to establish the theory that the rulers there were a great and not only in helping the spread of the sects but protecting them against heavy odds which were so powerful in those days. This, also, resulted in the production of great and huge literature devoted to the Krishna cult and this, in fact, is the basis of my semiotic study of the Braj area. All the cult-literature has a flavour which is of a similar nature and from which it is possible to gather the salient features of the Braj culture. Surely the literature is the mirror reflecting glimpses of the society which form the basis of the real culture of the population. I have tried to explain at another place the real nature of culture as it is interpreted in our country, a little different from the western conception for I find more of the 'inner' in our culture than the 'outer' aspect in the other and the culture of Braj which is so much influenced by the prevailing sects of Krishna and has become more of an inspiration and an exposition of the heart on account of the sentimentalism attached to the sects here. I shall try an analysis of the same in the pages to follow.

4

SEMIOTIC INTERPRETATION

PROLOGUE

Before attempting the interpretation some notions need a bit of clarification. It must be admitted that the study is a sort of cultural type and indications are drawn from the written material which has some specifications :

1. the material gathered is from manuscripts;
2. the authors of the manuscripts, are from Rajasthan or those patronised by the Rajasthani chiefs;
3. the manuscripts used are unpublished; and
4. the authors of these compilations are the devotees of Lord Krishna ; they belong to the different sects existing in the Braj area or as spread in the Rajasthan.

Semiotics has been taken in a broad sence in the field of culture which, in its turn, also enjoys a wide range, beginning from very small items and going to deep important facts allied to culture. It may just relate to children's play or it may go to all the rigours of philosophical depths. In fact, culture is such a composite term that it touches different heights and brings into its fold the entire human structure in all the fields of activity. The descriptions given by the authors are also to relate to the life-events of a community and there can be no way getting out this limit. Each verse is connected with some aspect of life and if an interpretation is made into its very details it will cover a very long range; we have, therefore, to make a selection and bring down some significant items to record and interpret. Semiotics does that, for it depends on the indications and suggestions that relate to some aspect of society—individual or group—and we can build up the whole structure if we so desire or glean some important facts which distinguish a particular society from a group. As has aleady been narrated semiotics is applicable to almost all fields of human activity and can be found in all activities. It is for this reason that there are various types of semiotics; of which culture is one. This gives emphasis to the cultural life of an individual or a group of individuals and can be based on so many things each one bringing out some clear picture of the society. Here I have confined my attention to those suggestions and sayings as are recorded by persons of a definite character. They belong to the Krishna sect in their religious faith and to the state of Rajasthan. I experienced that both these things were a little difficult to determine for Krishna has pervaded all the faiths in the country and is interpreted differently, sometimes as the formless supreme being running the entire world by His all powerfulness, sometimes the blooming and most attractive human form being born of worldly parents and enticing the people around and sometimes one of the Trinity being born after the prayers of the afflicted. But I have drawn a line of distinction and confined myself to some well-known sects. So also Rajasthan has been given a big boost and taken to mean those who are related to the area in some way or the other. It was sometimes very difficult to decide if a particular author was to come within the prescribed geographical limits for there are no indications and the text alone is to be trusted. In many cases the find spot a particular manuscript has been utilised in assigning the location of the author who in his turn proved a wanderer in many cases.

I have taken care to confine myself to some popular items of life which are enjoyable and at the same time characteristic of the place. For example *Rāsa* is one such item. It lends colour to several human activities—it is related to religion, it throws light on the way of worship, it points out the esteem in which the main persons are held by the common people, it shows the colour of costumes, the ways of dressing, it brings out the habits and practices of merry-making by means of sports and dances, it displays the artistic nature of the area and tells the various modes of performance and the playing of musical instruments, it tells the language used, the intonation and other linguistic characteristics, the sort of stories and modes of playfulness in the area, the pastoral life and the ways of tending the cows, the relationship between men and women, between young and old and between the several relations, it also tells us the way of life led by different members of the society—the *pandit*, the small chieftains, the *gopis* and the *gopas*, the importance of the cow and the river Yamuna, the trees and vegetation, the types of outdoor games, the food habits and the articles used as food items, the gossip among the young and the elder, the relationship between several individuals, the humour, the witty affairs, jokes and frolics, the modes of travel and commercial exchanges, the affluence of the place, the simplicity of habits, the ignorance of the people, the birds and beasts, the flora and fauna and so many other things and aspects of cultural life. This is just one example of a particular item which forms an important trait of the Braj life and has made its extension to long and far off places, now overseas also.

Semiotics has played an important part in Indian life and I think some of the outer symbols are of significance even now. A Hindu is known from the sacred thread over the shoulder and hanging to the waist, the tuft of hair over the head right in the centre of the skull, the mark on the forehead without which the part of the body is considered like the burial place. A Sikh is known by the five 'Ks'—the *Kara*, *Kachha*, *Kripan*, *Kesh* and *Kanghi* (the iron bangle round the right wrist, the underwear, the long hair never cut, the small daggar hanging on the side and the comb to dress the hair). A devout Muslim could be known from the mark on the forehead as a result of bowings, a Jain saint of a particular sect from the piece of white cloth tied over the lips and so on. Now all these symbols of a sectarian nature are on the decline. You will find very small number of Hindus observing the prescribed rules, rather those doing so are thought to be of an orthodox type and among the educated; the tuft of hair on the skull is now a rare phenomenon. Sikhs, however, are maintaining the tradition and they can be distinguished from their long hair under the long turban tied over their heads. The Jain monks are also keeping up the practice. The robes of a Bauddha ascetics are also of a special type. It so seems that the symbolic life of the society has migrated to the religious order and the ordinary persons are carrying on things in a non-symbolic way. It is sometimes difficult now to distinguish persons as belonging to different communities which was possible earlier on the basis of certain outward indications. But all these lead to some conclusions on the social and religious status of persons. The same story may be told with regard to the religious marks of the forehead of different sects. A good study has been made of these symbols and you can draw some important conclusions just by observing the *tilaka* on the forehead of a person. Even in one sect there are some small variations to suggest some difference in the religious affinities of a person, In the Gaudiya sect, for example, you will find the main outer *tilaka* to be almost of the same type coming to the nose but the turn over the nose, the form of the turn, the symbol inside the main *tilaka*, the colour and the material used, the lengths make all the difference. So also among the Ramanandis you can meet some variations of details and these variations will lead to some important facts relating to the faith of the individual and the order to which one belongs. The *tilaka* is allowed both to the persons of a religious order or of a saintly living and to ordinary householders among whom the practice is on the decline. Some religions allow the *tilaka* marks to the ladies as well, just among the Gaudiyas but in some sects ladies do not put the religious marks and are more concerned with the marks of their social status.

In this regard a brief account of non-communicative behaviour specially in the Braj area will not be out of interest. Communication is an important feature of livings beings—I say living beings because apart from human beings other living organisms are also in constant communicative process. Communication is the interchange of thoughts and ideas and the means for such an interchange. For communication one does not know how many devices have-been discovered and perhaps man has been more resourceful in this respect. He has also made specialisation of symbolic behaviour peculiar to different cultures and living conditions of societies. Some of the chief systems of communication are : 1. vocalisation—making certain well-defined types of noises as distinguished from language, 2. gestures and body movements—these too have been organised and in a society they communicate and are taken for a distinct meaning in a given context, 3. language—supposed to be the most powerful system of communication and capable of being minutely analysed. Even in vocalisation we may have differentiation on the basis of vocal quality, emotional situations, age, sex, etc. It may include crying, laughing, whispering, shouting, nasalisation, moaning and so on. A system of kinesics involves units of body motions or gestures, such as an extended fingure, a wink, a raising or other movements of the eye-brow, shaking of the head, movements of the arm and so on. It has been found that many of the kinesic communicative systems are alike in different parts of the world. They have been found to have more common features than the linguistic systems which, as a matter of fact, is the most complex system of communication but possessed of much greater potency in the field of communication and used most widely.

When we talk of communications we think of two units—the one for effecting communication and the other for receiving communication, and for both these units a medium of communication is necessary. This medium is the communicative channel with the help of which the message passes from one unit to the other. Of course this communicative channel in semiotics refers to the signs and symbols which are employed at different stages by people of different types. Here comes in the conception of a code. The communicative channel is the code and the first unit encoder and the other as the decoder. The action is performed through the code which may be language or a symbol. Whenever an act of communication takes place there is always some message transmitted from one unit to the other. The process is not quite so simple as it seems outwardly. The Indian phoneticians describe it through seven and some times nine stages and gave each one a name, beginning from *Ātman* and ending with *Ātman*. The process has been also described as beginning from the urge for communication and passing on to the stage of devising the most effective means for satisfying the urge. This needs a kind of selection out of so many alternatives and when once it is decided the act of communication takes place. The signals now get active and they draw the attention of the receiver, who after getting the signals tries to interpret them. If the act of interpretation is effective, the communication is successful which can always be determined by the reaction that takes place. The action or reaction can be seen from further act of transmission or simple acceptance. Sometimes it may result in some physical activity, in which one or both the units may be involved. This process goes on in society, between individuals and groups of individuals. It may also happen that one individual communicates to a mass or *vice versa*. But communication is the most important and constant function in human society, and perhaps more complex than found among other species of animals.

It is well-known that the communicative behaviour may be verbal or non-verbal. It is a known fact that language is a later development. In earlier stages of human growth there must have been some kind of vocalisation and some set signs for effecting communication. Possibly the 'sign language' as we may call it must have been a sort of communication by bodily movements. Even now organised sign language is found in many parts of the world. In the plains, the North American tribes, with mutually intelligible code, communicated through a system of hand movements and thus carry on all their business. In India, too, the Naga tribes of Assam have a remarkably flexible sign language which reveals inventiveness and ingenuity on the part of the communicator. There is a reference that when Rama and Lakshmana were in exile they often used sign language : for example, when Rama asked Lakshmana to chop off the nose and ears of Surpanakha, they talked through signs of hands and fingers. In Australia also, gestures formed the basis as an extended system of signs among the aborgines. There is no doubt that gestures, facial expressions and other bodily movements facilitate communication among other people, kinesically supplementing and emphasising verbal behaviour. I am tempted to say that with the formal language the non-verbal behaviour goes a long way to create the desired effect. Really speaking formal language is only a part of our communicative behaviour.

It has been observed that every people have a set of symbols, signs and gesture that serve the system of communication by supplementing the language effect. It is a nice study to trace how such indications came into existence and to what extent they prove effective. As has been observed semiotics in the common sense means the science of symbols and symptoms. In earlier times semiotics was a branch of the medical science interpreting symptoms. Now it is a symbolic behaviour conveying some definite meaning. In India we have had the *Sanketavijñana* or the *Pratikavidya* which deal with signs and symbols and are, thus, allied to the modern science of semiotics. The first of these sciences is connected with bodily actions and the second makes use of physical objects. It is rightly observed that Indian symbolism is of an extensive nature and has been used so very often in the field of religion, art and literature as a special method of expression conveying certain ideas, feelings or sentiments. Language is, also, a sort of sign assembling but it has been so organised that it forms a separate system by itself.

The non-verbal behaviour in the act of communication is of two types supplementing or expanding the language communication and serving as a means of communication by itself. In my country different symbolic devices are employed for communication, making use of symbols, signs, gestures, bodily actions, costumes, colours and upkeep of the physical form. It may be added here that there are occasions when many people take a vow of silence for longer or shorter periods. During such occasions all kinds of gestures and signs are frequently used for communication. Some people take their meals without using language and on such occasions they have no option but to resort to signs for while eating they cannot use the writing device. I am reminded here of the discussion between the poet Kalidasa and Vidyottama who were made to discuss certain notions by means of bodily movements. And the story goes that the gestures were so interpreted that it resulted in the marriage of the two, although the poet was a perfect illiterate at that time and the lady had taken down the vow to marry only that person who would defeat her in discussion. It was later, so goes the story, that Kalidasa became the Kalidasa whom we know for a great poet.

In one of my articles presented to a world congress I pointed out the semiotics of pregnancy, the birth of a child, the identifying marks of a religious or social group, the dresses as a distinguishing factor, the modes of invitations to attend marriages, the *tilaka* marks on the forehead, ways of greetings and their consequent returns, bodily sections indicating respect, repentence, submission, arrogance, teasing acceptance, pride, boastfulness, anger and the marks seen on the forehead of a woman, etc.

SEMIOTICS OF CULTURE

Culture has been defined and analysed to certain extent elsewhere. Its inner as well as the outer aspects have been brought out and it has been attempted how the Indian concepts of culture differs from the western and what attempts have been made to find a harmonious blending of the two. As said elsewhere semiotics is another way of expression and there can be nothing in this world which extend beyond expression. The various symbols, signs, gestures, human activities play their part in bringing out the salient features of the culture of a community. Here I shall give certain examples from the Braj area and the ways of expressions employed by the Braj people.

The institution of singing the *Rasia* and the gestures employed therein and the bodily movements accompanying it is an example. The peculiar music and the notes which are produced from the special musical instruments used then are of interest. The tune, the bodily movements, the notes, the music, form of the instruments and the general behaviour of the singer, spectators and the instrument players tell a singular tale; they convey a message that reveal the character of the people and the inner feelings that purvey the whole atmosphere. Or we may take an example of the *rāsa*—the characters, the dresses, the dance movements, the promptors, the *swami*, the *lila* enacted, the gestures made by the various parts of the body; all these exhibit a particular atmosphere and tell the character of the place. We may again take an example from the temples for the Braj culture is so very much allied to religion and the religious practices that are involved. We may look at the diety, the *pujari*, the worshippers, the dresses worn by the two and the *tilakas* put on the forehead by the devotees. The dress of the diety, the ornaments put on by them, the posture in which they stand and the colour of the face and other bodily parts tell so many things about the culture of that particular society to which the temple belongs. All these are the features which reveal the peculiarities of the culture of a populace. These play an important part in indicating the salient points with which a society is known.

In the same way extracts from literature tell us many things about the society which is depicted in them. In fact the evidences from books are better records about the details of a society than the other modes of indication. As I said at another place culture is a mode of living and the facts of life and behaviour go together to give colour to a particular culture. Social habits and practices are an outcome of the feelings that are cherished by the members of a society and literature is a true record of these social events either through exact descriptions or certain stories woven round some facts of actual life. When I talk of the manuscripts of the poets of Rajasthan devoted to the Krishna cult, I presuppose many things such as the place of abode is Rajasthan with all its peculiarities, the faith is in the Krishna devotion with its characteristics of worship and observances, the profession or vocation is a literary one with all its training and mental equipment, etc. All these taken together gives us an idea of the person behind the utterings and when these are disposed in a well set background the picture of the place to which the descriptions are related becomes clear and we are able to form some clear notions about the place to which the descriptions relate. Thus the stories, descriptions and incidents serve as the semiotics of some culture which stands prominently in the works of these poets belonging to a certain religious order.

Semiotics observed in the following activities give colour to the culture of the area depicted in the writings :

1. The ceremonies from the time of birth to the coming up of age;
2. way of playing and acquiring education;
3. practices of marriages observed by the people in performing them;
4. making merriment and playing sports and games;
5. several arts and crafts;
6. religious observances and practices;
7. feasts and festivities;
8. ways of living in the day to day life;
9. habits of living, business, modes of earning livelihood;
10. industries and productive activities;
11. decorations of the household; and
12. several things used in life and for making plans and projects.

The sum total of the descriptions in these aspects of life gives a composite picture of the society displaying the culture to which they are attached and this forms the keynote of their behaviour. This in fact is a link process because it needs so much of reading and observation but it makes the surest basis of giving a true picture.

The observations of Dr. Hoppal of the Folklore Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest deserve a special mention in this connection for his approach is Ethnosemiotics which he adopted for his researches on the Hungarian society. He begins with the observation that, 'Culture can be viewed as a system of signs'. In a given culture the institutionalised communication systems make it possible for socio-cultural life to function. And communication is only possible through signs and sign systems. Over three decades ago, one of the classics of semiotics concluded that all forms of social behaviour depend upon the existence and extension of systems of communication. Human civilisation is dependent upon signs and system of signs and the human mind is inseparable from the functioning of signs.

In the recent years some four or five decades ago large scale advances in researches on the system of signs have been carried out. Studies of the various activities of the signs have produced wonderful results through the efforts of Lotman, Eco, Rossi-Landi, Crampen and Sebeok. But it must also be seen clearly that the results only concern the area of detail. The time has now come to summarize the results of analysing the various cultural codes, and fit them into the framework of a unified theory of Culture. Endeavours towards this have already been made.

The semiotic view of culture was the comprehensive theory into which the concept of culture as a type of memory or a type of information storing mechanism could be adjusted. Sebeok observed that culture is a hierarchically constructed system of various phenomena of the intellectual life of man and society. On another occasion he remarked 'biological as well as cultural phenomena can be comprehended as aspects of information handling : storage, feedback, message-channelling'. It stores, accumulates and exchanges information. Culture, therefore, is regarded as a system which stores and transfers information. It operates by using symbols and systems of symbols and codes the information in the widest variety of several systems and types. In culture anything can become a symbol, if convention turns it into one, and there is much we can learn of a culturally cohesive human group simply through finding out what it uses for signs. The condition for understanding is that the signs show the connection between the similar processes of thinking and similar reaction on the level of social use.

It must be clearly understood that in culture it is always the plurality and coincidence of sign systems and codes which contain the information. Any pluricodality, that is, the simultaneous use of more than one code certainly serves to transfer the cultural message. For example a folk song uses language and musical tones and it may also be accompanied by gesture. This pluricodality, recognition of which was one of the basic achievements of ethnosemiotics, according to Greimas, steps up the reliability of the message transfer to an incredible degree but at the sametime it makes it far more difficult to analyse these complex phenomena. This means that when analysing cultural phenomena using more than three codes simultaneously pluricodality it must be clearly seen that the codes separated from one another. These phenomena would include folk customs, sound films, the musical theatre and circus. The complicated and complex cultural text can only be understood with the help of several types of codes. The issue is complicated still further by the fact that any single type of text organised in this complicated way is still but a single code in the whole of a culture; in other words it is but one subsystem among the many. Some of the Russian semioticians put it in this way : 'Culture is constructed as a hierarchy of semiotic systems'. They consider culture to be a total of the hierarchy of different sign systems and texts and the mass of the related functions from the aspect of semiotics; in other words, they feel it to be a mechanism which creates these texts. This same outlook appears in Eco's recent work when he speaks of systems of code, systems and the processes of unlimited semiosis. We can understand culture in the creation of codes, the unlimited processes of reproduction and intertwining and this is the theoretical concept which provides a foundation for the ethnosemiotic analysis of the phenomena of folklore.

Culture is visible in the collective customs and customs are the basis of a society which uses a code of sign systems to give ventilation to its feelings and outer behaviour. The customs of different people may be compared and thus we can have ideas of varying cultures; for example we may take the wedding customs of some people and we can arrive at the points of difference between the given communities. Even such events as giving receptions to a complex audience leads to distinctions of culture. I remember several receptions to which I was invited in several foreign countries where some persons, including myself, were present in their national robes. Our national dress, for example, with the head cover, the long coat called *achkan* and the tight *pyjama* called *chooridar*, at the time of attending official ceremonies is a combination of the Hindu and Muslim cultures. Thus garments, uniforms, proxemics, the shots, the signals with whistles, the anthems, the words of greetings, the gestures of handshaking, and many other coinciding phenomena lead to conclusions about varying cultures. But it must be admitted that apart from this outward gestures there are certain aspects of our behaviour which concern our inner self and that too lends colour to our culture.

One of the key concepts of ethnosemiotics is the plurality of codes, and this type of analysis throws light on the hierarchy of the different codes. The differences between the codes, their role in culture and their importance can come to light by determining how often they are used, how often they play a dominant role in a given folk custom or in social events in general. Every code contains a definite mode of behaviour and these types of behaviour are in fact the socially institutionalised social techniques, examination of which is one of the fundamental tasks of the science of semiotics.

If a series of actions of events is to become socially important it must become a sort of rite as we have the sixteen rites among the orthodox Hindus, from the time of conception in the womb to the time of the last rites of the dead. This has been true in India and atleast in theory, and more so in the Braj area where the sixteen rites do continue in some way or the other. These practices which become a sort of rite can be seen even in small events like a football match, or a bout between the two wrestlers, the start of a commercial concern and the initiation of the child in the first lesson. An analysis of social practices and the operation of pragmatic aspects show the possibility which the science has to contribute to the theory of culture.

5

RAJASTHAN

Rajasthan has played an important part in the propagation of Braj culture. It has produced large number of good poets devoted to the Krishna cult; it has given protection to the Braj *goswamis* in the face of great dangers to their life and the upkeep of their religion; it has arranged for the establishment of suitable places for the temple idols when they were dislodged due to their being threatened by muslim raiders. The chiefs of many of the Rajasthan states adopted Vaishnavism as their faith and religion. Rajasthan rulers made generous grants for the Braj places of religious significance; they patronised the language and the poets of the Braj area. They made timely visits to the temples in Braj and made suitable offerings each time. Many of the poets and religious heads were invited to the courts of the *durbars* and all types of favours were showered on them. From the old documents and *firmans* it is getting clear what a great amount of patronage arising out of a sense of devotion to the deity was accorded to the important persons of this area. A good study of these documents, mostly in Persian is being made at the Vrindaban Research Institute which houses a large number of documents from the temples. It is, therefore, thought proper that some idea of the Rajasthan life and culture is given here.

Rajasthan states are no more now and the ruling chiefs are facing a hard time due to all their rights and privileges drawn from them. Of course many of the chiefs had no right to claim these special favours but it does make a sense to note the change brought about in the new circumstances. This has influenced the contribution of the Rajasthan rulers to the spread and upkeep of the culture of Braj which at one time has received such a stimulus from these rulers. So far as the temples are concerned they exist even now in the different places of Rajasthan and they continue the rituals in their traditional way but the glamour that they enjoyed during the times of the rulers has vanished. As a matter of fact the tendency toward lessening devotion to the temples is spreading in Rajasthan as well and people are getting to newer ways of life and living which leaves very little place to religion and devotion to deities, although the *puja* and worship of the deities is being carried on in the circumstances as best as possible. It may be noted here that inspite of the new trend getting foothold everywhere Braj is an exception and each year it draws a larger number of devoted pilgrims, an extended programme of building construction, more people joining *tirthayātras* and greater expenditure on religious affairs. Rajasthan is perhaps second in this regard and all this is due to the past history of a religious propagation in this part of the country. There is one feature about Rajasthan that it possibly observed the prescribed rule of the four *varnas*—the rulers themselves thought them selves to be the kshtriyas and the brahmans naturally enjoyed respect and patronage. The other two communities, namely the vaishyas and shudras were there and thus a society, on the lines of the prescribed details developed in Rajasthan. The rulers thought it was their duty to provide protection to the deities and the brahman community and the cow. Cow is an important factor of the Braj life and so are the people who perform the acts of worshipping the deities in the temple and are experts in reciting and explaining religious texts. The atmosphere in Rajasthan catered to the upkeep and survival of the Braj culture and that was the reason why the semiotics of Braj culture are being discussed on the basis of manuscripts produced by Rajasthani poets devoted to the Krishna cult.

Rajasthan is said to be the heart of India. It is known for its valour and its struggles for the upkeep of freedom. It is towards the west of the sub-continent and has its borders very closely touching those of Pakistan. Rajasthan has seen the two Pakistani wars in which the western part was exposed to heavy bombardments. But all that happened when the institution of the princes was finished and the forces of independent India were responsible for protecting the boundaries of the land. But the period which is relevant to our purpose is earlier to it and I intend to describe the Rajasthan of those days. Rajasthan is formed of the several native states, some of which like Tonk were ruled by muslim *nawabs*; but the majority of states about two dozens in number, were governed by Hindu rulers, called *Rājās* and *Maharājās*. In offering patronage to the Braj culture the rulers of the west were as keen as the rulers of the east. The Braj culture and religion spread all over the area which was shared equally by the rulers and the ruled. Almost all the Rajasthan chiefs had their palaces in the form of *kunjas* and temples in the Braj, specially in Vrindaban because that forms the central point of the area and is so intimately related to Lord Krishna who was adored, loved and worshipped by a very large number of people in Rajasthan. These palaces exist even now and they are under a department of the Rajasthan Government but they have lost all their glory and sense of appeal to the people for the rulers to whom they were related cannot make their contribution to their upkeep and the department deals with them in a way it deals with other institutions. But it proves the fact how intimate had been the relation between Rajasthan and the Braj.

When we look at the people residing in this area we find that they followed the well-known dictum '*yathā rājā tathā prajā*'—as is the ruler so are the subjects. They followed the same religion and religious practices that were prevalent in the royal household. The Hindus there were mostly Vaishnavas and worshipped Rama and Krishna and had the same respect to Braj and the priests there. The religious feasts and festivities were observed by them in the same style and they made religious pilgrimages to these holy lands on appropriate occasions. The language spoken by the people of Rajasthan is certainly different from the one spoken in Braj but you will find no Hindu who does not recite the *Ramcharitmānas* of Tulsi or the *padas* of Surdas at proper times. Often in the morning and in the evening you will find elderly persons singing some *padas* of the Braj poets relating to the life and exploits of Krishna. I refer to the attitude found in some earlier times to establish a relationship between the two parts of the country. So far as the eastern states of Rajasthan like the states of Bharatpur, Dholpur and Karauli are concerned they were part and parcel of Braj. The language spoken is Braj and some of the places fall in the *Brajyātra* as well. But the Braj influence is found all over the place and we have reasons to believe that the Rajasthan poets had to do a lot in contributing to the Braj culture.

Culture has its exposition in the religion that is found in a particular place and in religion the temples and other religious places have an important place. I have gone to all corners of Rajasthan and I find that the number of temples establishsed in Rajasthan is more in the case of Krishna than any other diety. This speaks about the spread of the Krishna cult in this area. True the province of Rajasthan gave shelter to other religions as well and Islam and Christianity as well as Jainism found suitable places for carrying on their own practices and tenets of worship. In some states the patronage given by the Hindu rulers was at par with other religions also. Just to quote an example from my state itself, the state of Bharatpur. There are two big religious buildings—a mosque and a temple. The two are the largest religious constructions both built under the scheme of the state. The practice was that some money was deducted each month from the salaries of government servants. The deductions made out of the salary of Muslim public servants were diverted to the construction of the mosque and those from the salary of their Hindu counterparts were used in building the Hindu temple attributed to the goddess Ganga. It can be very clearly seen as proof of the religious tolerance and equal treatment given to all sections of the state population, although the ruler professed the religion of his forefathers and made special contributions to it.

In all the parts of Rajasthan there are temples where we can find idols of Krishna, Rama, Lakshmana, Hanuman, Ganesh, Devi, Bhairava, Sanisvara, Bhumia, Serha, Shiva and at one place of Brahma also. When we collect the figures we come to the conclusion that temples for Krishna are by far the most numerous, atleast in so far as their proper upkeep and worshipping ceremonies are concerned. Among these the names of the Vallabhi temples deserve special mention.

To me it seems that the temples of the Vallabh sect are most important and best cared for. Visiting Nathdwara, Kankroli, Kamaban, Jodhpur, Udaipur, Kota we are impressed with the dignified way in which the deity is worshipped. There are several Bihariji temples also. The famous Nimbarka temple of Bharatpur, the temple of Banrupbehari in Alwar, and in many more places reveal the fact that after the Vallabhi temples the Nimbarka ones are of importance. There are Radahavallabhi temples also but not many in number. There are some very interesting tales about the establishment of these temples. I relate here just a couple. There are Gaudiya temples also like the Radhadamodar and the Gobindji in Jaipur. The Bharatpur temple of Bihariji is said to commemorate the event of the Nagababaji seeing Krishna when his bunches of hair got entangled in the shrubs of a place now inside the Bharatpur fort. A temple was erected there and the idols of Radha and Krishna placed to indicate the spot where Nagababaji had glimpse of the Supreme Being who disentangled his hair from the shrubs and where Krishna give *darshan* to the Naga with Radha. The Alwar temple has another story which I discovered in a rare manuscript found in the Alwar office of the Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute. It is a manuscript of historical importance giving a description how the temple of Shri Banrupbehariji was constructed after the joint name of the ruler and his queen. The name of the ruler was Banaisingh from which 'Ban' has been taken and the name of the *Rani* was Rupkanwari from which 'rup' is taken. Joining the two together and relating them to Behariji we get the name of the deity as 'Banrupbehariji'. The *Rani* had a dream and asked the ruler to get the temple erected and put the idol of Behariji in it. All the details of a historical value with regard to the construction and enthroning the deity are described acurately. The manuscript is so far unpublished and it may reveal several facts of the state. I had just a casual glance through it and found it very interesting as to how the temples were erected and how each one has something to say of which some are based on historical facts and throw a light on the religious beliefs and practices of the times. The temples in Rajasthan are also known, atleast some of them, for the good manuscript libraries attached to the temples. I had occasions to examine the material in Kota, Nathdwara, Kankroli, Kaman and Jodhpur and we get a few original materials. The same may be said with regard to the libraries of the then rulers. I have since seen the palace libraries at Alwar, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Bharatpur, Bikaner and Udaipur and I find that the rulers of the states had great interest in manuscripts. This can be seen in several respect.

1. They kept the court poets who were given liberal patronage and were allowed a free hand in their compositions. It was quite a different case that some of them used their talents in singing praises of their patrons.

2. A number of scribes were kept at the royal court and they were busy in copying several texts mostly religious and also to help the court poets. Some of the poets, themselves, were good scribes and they were well rewarded by the *Rājās* and sometimes by their high officers.

3. Besides the ruling princes, their relations were of the same temperament, that is, they also accorded patronage to some poets and scribes. We have the historical fact about the brother of the king of Bharatpur, Pratapsingh, the chief of Weir in whose court flourished one of the great Hindi poet Somanath. Besides, the *Ranis* offered the same honour to poets. Again to quote from Bharatpur we have Maharani Girijakanwari who liked poets so much for their literary performances.

4. Good rewards were sometime offered to the poets. The poet in the court of Jaipur, Behari got good reward for the couplets he composed. So also the poet Shivarama of Bharatpur got a reward of thirty thousand rupees for the composition of one book. Think of the amount in those days. I think the award beats down the present day nobel prize.

5. The manuscripts produced were well kept in nice bindings and with good wrappers. The art of conservation, though not in its present form, but in some form was adhered to for the protection of the books. We admire the beautiful bindings which we find in the palace libraries.

6. Separate apartments were assigned to the housing of the manuscripts and they were well looked after. In some palaces there existed good catalogues also. Although there was no office like that of librarian, an officer

of the palace was repsonsible for the safe custody of the manscripts.

All this led to the safety of the literature that was produced or copied down and we find some of these collections of great value. It is satisfying to note that even after all the ill luck that has fallen to the native chiefs some of them continue to look after well their literary acquisitions.

I may add about the temple libraries as well. I have seen many such libraries and I have a mixed feeling towards them. Some of the temples have really done a good job in keeping the manuscripts well, preparing catalogues, wrapping them nicely, allowing the scholars to take advantage of these treasures but some have proved false to their sacred duty and have not done their job well and the scholars have also been disappointed by their behaviour. Though it is not relevant but I may mention here that the Jain monks and nuns of Rajasthan have done and are doing admirable work in the field of manuscripts. I have seen some of the *Upasaras* where the work of producing manuscripts goes on unhindered. The *Sādhus* and *Sādhwis* are busy in their work and they continue to maintain good traditions of keeping them well. Some of the manuscript repositories are in the underground and steel or alumonium cases are provided for keeping the manuscripts. They take good care that atmosphere does not act adversely on the longivity of the literary treasures.

Thus Rajasthan seems to be supplementing the Braj traditions of keeping up the semiotics of Braj culture for what was not possible in the Braj area was supplied by the rulers of the states of Rajasthan. Money, land, patronage, upkeep, safety, shelter, propagation—all were so well provided by the rulers. And the people also did well to follow the principles of the cult, by frequent visits to Braj, making generous gifts to the priests, professing the faith devoutly, observing the ceremonies on appropriate occasions, and all types of activities in their life and behaviour. The people of Rajasthan are noted for their traditionalism and it is through them the banner of faith is carried forward.

Vaishnavism has such an enticing effect on the population that all those who went that way were encompassed by its soothing effects. We may say a word about the Vaishnavas of the temples. I had occasions to examine the material in Kota, Nathdwara, Kankroli, Kaman and Jodhpur and we get a few original materials. The same may be said with regard to the libraries of the then rulers. I have since seen the palace libraries at Alwar, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Bharatpur, Bikaner and Udaipur and I find that the rulers of the states had great interest in manuscripts. This can be seen in several respect.

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Vaishnavism has such an enticing effect on the population that all those who went that way were encompassed by its soothing effects. We may say a word about the Vaishnavas of

Gujarat also who have more affinity to the people of Rajasthan. But the Braj literature is not to be found there in so much quantity. In fact, the language of poetry inside the extensive province of Rajasthan those days when it contained so many different principalities was for all purposes *Braj* and for devotional literature there was absolutely no other choice. This resulted in great number of manuscripts devoted to the Krishna cult; much of it lies untouched. I have, however, made no distinction in compositions, either in *Braj* or in Rajasthani, so long as they continue to propagate the ideas of the cult. But I do admit that not many Rajasthani works were possible. There were found some compositions about the marriage of Krishna with Rukmini, called '*veli*' but culturally speaking that relates to some other culture and not the Braj culture. Indeed the one thing that Krishna deplored all through his stay in Dwarka was that he did not get the Braj atmosphere in that far off land. It was so dear to him and often he said that he could never forget the Braj with its special culture of a free and sweet nature. It was curious to find that though produced in different areas the Rajasthani manuscripts adhere so well to the Braj culture so much so that when I read the manuscript of Jodhpur, Kota or Jaipur I completely forget that it has been produced by a non-*Brajwasi.* It is a surprising fact that in the temples and the right sort of devotees are so good adherents to the culture of their deity.

From the practices of the cult I find strict adherence to the performances as they are observed in the Braj temples. But from the living of people in general we note certain differences. But the east of Rajasthan is an exception. It is a part and parcel of Braj and it is only for political reasons that we call this part Rajasthan. I am reminded at this place of the feelings of the people when the question arose which way the eastern states of the erstwhile Rajputana to go. The rulers thinking of the fate that the other chiefs may meet thought that they would better go with the other states. But the people wanted to meet their counterparts in the Uttar Pradesh. Nothing could be decided for sometime and a separate state was formulated called the United States of Matsya, comprising of the four states—Bharatpur, Alwar, Karauli and Dholpur. Later this part merged with the bigger state of Rajasthan. It is heard sometimes that the Braj is so significant culturally that some part of U.P. and some part of Rajasthan should be joined together to form a separate state with one language and one culture.

It may be added that the Krishna cult touched distant corners of the country and alongwith this the *Brajbhasha* also spread for Krishna and *Brajbhasha* have become so close that it is not possible to separate them. And there have been literary compositions in other parts as well but they have not that much of importance from my point of view. Bengal has also played an important part in spreading the cult and the Gaudiya sect about which I shall speak later is a creation of this province. But I have noted one thing that culturally speaking the Gaudiya temples and its followers are not so close to the culture of Braj as the other sects for the simple reason that the other ones owe their origin to the Braj itself. The cult did not have great adherence in the South and we do not find literature of importance. But when we think of Rajasthan we take off our hat to the contribution made by this state.

To interpret poetic lines in terms of semiotics in the field of culture is a difficult task for they show much more than culture alone. However, the term culture, according to the broader sense covers all aspects of human life and it is, infact, in this sense that I have tried in several places during the course of my analysis. I have mentioned in some contexts that Indians conceived the sixteen rites, *saṁskaras*, beginning from the conception in the mother's womb and ending not with the death of the person but continuing some days even after the cremation of the body. True it is that Indians believe in the immortality of the soul but they also put in practice the idea of having the death anniversary by celebrating with feasts offered to Brahmans and the members of the family, sometimes on a larger scale. The practice of observing the *dāgatithi* or death anniversary is so very common in the Braj area that even in my own house, which is considered rather modern, the death date of my father and mother are observed. We invite atleast one Brahman and one Brahmani for the occasion, feed them with the best items possible, give them monetary presents and a betel leaf each and then feed other members of the family which in India is much larger than in Europe where it confines just to the man and his wife and their children, if any. Out of these sixteen rites I have selected some and added to them some of the social observances peculiar to the Braj population at different levels of age and social status. I have explained elsewhere, what all consists in culture which has a notion of something artistic, something pleasing and something expressing the hidden faculties of man.

While quoting the lines from the texts I shall use diacritical marks for without them the lines cannot be read correctly, but in giving explanations and interpretations I would use the ordinary way of giving no such marks. In places it may not be possible to give full references, for in many cases they were lacking but as much information as possible has been given alongwith the text of the manuscripts gone through by me. I thought of presenting the material, but the only feasible way that I could find to be more specific was to describe the things under different headings. The work of collecting the references from the texts was done in India but interpretations are being done here, in Europe, where I have access to some books on the science of semiotics.

The several phases of life expressed through social, religious and other observances can be viewed from the cultural level. They can be seen, for example, in the following ways of life and practices :

1. *Seva-pūja* : The several forms of *seva-pūja* which are not only the practices of priests but have become a part of the family life; in some places each individual, including young ones, have their own *Ṭhākurji*, being worshipped almost in the same style as elsewhere even in the temples of a regular type. I have found that this practice of individual worship is of a peculiar nature in the Braj area, because each one concentrates on his or her diety which in Braj is to be found more in the idols of Radha and Krishna, sometimes Hanumanji also. In some cases Lord Shiva and Deviji are worshipped. But I would like to stress the worship of Radha and Krishna, for my observations are to be restricted to the Krishna cult. The formalities of worship are rather free in the houses but are confined to certain

rules in the regular temples of different religious sects in the Braj area.

2. *Svarūpas of Ṭhākurji* : Various names are given to the dietỳ, Lord Krishna, and to the places which are ascribed to them. In some way or the other they relate to lord Krishna but different names are given to show the significance of the diety, to differenciate one form from the other, to bring out the definite aspect of the deity, to show preferences of the worshipper or the diety or relation to a place or reference to some incident. These names are so very different and varied that we have a regular versification in the form of *Gopālasahasranāma*, one thousand names of Gopal or Krishna—a text regarded so very holy in the Braj and which forms a regular recitation with many of the worshippers and sometimes, as in a place in Vrindaban, being chanted all the twenty-four hours without any stoppage.

3. *Sājhī* : Very peculiar to Braj or to places where Braj culture found its way. It has several connotations such as—an elaborate drawing on the ground or on a wooden piece with the help of several colours, to light a small lamp within an earthen pot having holes for the light to flicker, to collect flowers in baskets and spread them on a fixed place in the company of friends; the last two ones being special to unmarried girls and the first one confined to temples and the art to a family where tradition has played an important part. In some temples it is done wonderfully well and several people go to visit it alongwith the *darshan* of the deity. Some pictures of these drawings are given elsewhere to show the art of this special type.

4. *Pichhwai* : The cloth, often painted, hung at the back of the deity. This is often a good piece of art and very much in demand by European Indologists. There are verses to be found in praise of these artistic paintings and in praise of the deity behind whom these tapestries are hang. I had occasion to find '*Pichhwai ke Kabitta*'.

5. *Chandan, tilaka* : Putting of religious marks on the forehead which involves an amount of care and an artistic execution with the fingures alone or with some apparatus made from some metal or wood. This has a significance to the person, his religious belief, his form of worship, etc. Some

work has been done on the characteristics of this aspect and the significance of the forms and the material needed. One of my students from London, Alan Entwistle and one colleague in India, G.C. Ghosh, have done some work on these forehead marks. Curiously enough, even in one sect you find several types of marks which have, of course, certain things in common but different in details.

6. *Sports* : Some of the sports have an all India character but some are peculiar to Braj and often played ever since; some are attributed to Krishna, though it can hardly be imagined if these sports were there when Krishna is believed to have been present. However, in the texts they are so intimately described that they seem to be actually played by the deity with his playmates. These sports have life and vigour of their own. Sports are certainly to be considered as a part of the culture of the place and I have included them among the cultural items of Braj. The Braj plays and sports enjoy a peculiar atmosphere of pastoral type and are full of free atmosphere and gaity.

7. *Names* : Naming the individuals form a part of a particular place. Though it is a separate ceremony among the sixteen rites but the names are often a revelation of the culture of the place. In my exposition of the names I have tried to give the names of men, women and the cow, for the cow plays a very important part in the Braj culture and the names are also peculiar, not the same as given to boys and girls. The names of the cows relate to their complexion, their habits, their gait, their utility in the family and the love which a family holds to the animal. So are the names of men and women giving their traits but often in obeyance to the particular star which the *pundit* pronounces. Study of names is a study in itself and leads to very interesting results.

8. *Sangita* : It has three aspects; the musical instruments employed, the music played and the dances which may accompany it. Braj is peculiar in all these three ways; its musical instruments are well-described, the notes are prescribed and the dances are of a different nature. Musical instruments are made in different ways, some are very simple, some complicated. In Braj these were rather of a very simple nature some being made from the reed found in the fields, some from the horns of

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animals and some from joining two or three pieces of wood; but there are references to complicated musical instruments as well, which are more for formal than for the actual use by the village population. I had chances to visit performances where a pair of bamboo flutes, called *algojha*, producing the notes of a *rasia* (a very familiar Braj note) to the accompaniment of a folk-dance performed mostly by women; but the man also gets excited sometimes and he jumps forward playing to the tunes in the *algojha* being played by a *rasia* a dandy in the tones which are also called *rasia*—the word means full of juice or sentimentalism in the person or in the tones coming out from him.

9. *Bhoga* : A term mostly used for feeding the deity but sometimes applied for serving the religious person or persons of high social status. In the case of the deity the *Bhoga* is served several times, the *Balbhoga* or breakfast, the *Rajabhoga* or the midday meal and the *Bhoga* of the evening meal. The *bhoga* affair is very peculiar and often very elaborate. For example if you look to a temple of the Vallabha sect you will find it a very elaborate in which the variety, number, quality, amount are all of huge nature. Best products are used and use of costly items like pure ghee, saffron, *kasturi*, costly spices of the purest type and in sufficient quantity so much so that not only the persons connected with the temple, and the number of such persons sometimes is in hundreds, but also the worshippers can get sufficient amount of the *bhoga* which to the latter class is generally on payment or as present from the priests. Good descriptions of the *bhoga* are to be found in the available texts and there are references to some bigger events in this connection, called *Chhappanbhoga*, *Annakuṭa*, *Kuṇḍawara* or the like. In some places there are arrangements by which the ascetics or the *sadhus* staying or coming to the place are fed in the day and they are treated without any distinction to the sect to which they may belong. This practice is called *pangat* and sometimes *bhandara* when it is held on a bigger scale on some festive day or on the instance of some rich person who wants to give such on behalf of a temple or an *ashrama* of some religious sect. In Vrindaban and other places in Braj such *bhandaras* are quite common and they serve to feed many of those people who have a difficult time in finding meals to themselves.

There is one more practice with regard to serving the needy in matters of food and this is the distribution of some type of breakfast in the form of some bread or *Khichari* (made from rice and pulses and a good meal to the persons, very easy to prepare and easy to serve). *Khichari* is a very common meal in the country and is said to be good in several ways. Food and its preparation is a very complicated affair in our country and in the temples belonging to some of the Krishna sect it has become quite a difficult job, often looked after by the chief cook, the *bhandri* and *rasoiya*.

10. *Festivals* : A lot has been said on this point but in the texts that we get most importance is given to the festival *holi*, also called *Vasantotsava* or *Basant*. The Braj *holi* is known throughout the country and these days are some of the very crowded days in Braj. Some places such as Barsana and Nandagaon are very much known in this connection. They say "*holi khelan to chalo Barsane janha manche rangili holi*"—if you want to play holi let us go to Barsana where there is colorful holi. The Barsana *holi* celebrations have been described elsewhere and shall be further elaborated when the texts are quoted. Besides *holi* there are many more festivals celebrated in Braj; infact, some of the religious organisations issue their own calendars of these dates. Among the sects there are what they call '*varshotsava ke pada*' which means the *padas* which are sung on the festival days in an year. Many poets have written about these festivals and some people have collected these *padas* from various poets at one place referring to particular festival. Besides the birth anniversaries of some of the *goswamis* are celebrated as festivals in the sects and the sect temples. The Haridas Jayanti, for example is observed in the Haridasi sect not only with special activities but also as a great function of music by the best musicians of the country irrespective of the religion to which an artist may belong and many of these persons are muslims but they pay their respects with music performances to the *guru* of the famous Tansen who was the chief court musician in the times of the Moghul Emperor Akbar.

11. *Literary forms* : Culture has to do a lot with literature and each language has its own way of expression in so far as the idioms and proverbs are concerned for they relate to

the place and the area where the language is spoken. The texts of the poets belonging to the Krishna cult have a language of their own and some of the idioms are to be found in that area. I am reminded of an incident at the University of Allahabad where a teacher was teaching some lines from a poet of *Brajbhasha*. He belonged to the area where Chatisgarhi is spoken and he failed to explain the idiom '*mamipina*' which in every day Braj means even to the ordinary people to be partial to some one. The expression was '*udho pibat mami*' *Udho* is taking the side of or *Udho* is favourably inclined to. This happens because idioms develop under some local circumstances.

12. *Dresses and ornaments* : There are references to the particular type of dresses worn by a Brajbasi-boy, girl, man or woman- and in many cases the names of these dresses are given. Same is the case with ornaments worn by the Braj population and some of these continued even to the present times. Some ornamentation was done by such things as the feathers of birds, the horns of animals, the shells of the place and colouring of body parts. I remember that when a boy I was presented a pair of ear rings called *gurdia* often worn by grown up people but now the practice has been given up. Some boys had garlands made of the trunk of a lily sort of creeper found in water. The flower is like that of the lotus plant closes in the day in case of lily. The peacock feather was also used for purposes of ornamentation; of course, even now the diety Krishna has a crown of peacock feather—called '*moramukaṭ*'. Colouring of the body parts has been very common with women and even perhaps all over the world women use various sorts of colour to ornament the parts of their body—the lipstick, the yellow pigment for face by the Burmese, the red colouring of the hands, feet and fingure nails, the *vlac̈hk* or some other colour for the eyebrow, the paints on the face by the south Indian women, the use of eye-ungnent often black, and several kinds of colours. Besides the large number of gold and silver ornaments precious stones were also used. Men also made use of these ornamentation devices.

13. *Marriage ceremony* : It plays, perhaps, the most important part among Indians. Of all the sixteen *samaskāras* the marriage rites are most elaborate and marriage is expensive with plenty of social value and family relations. Each part of India

established its own practice of marriage formalities, yet the basic rites and facts there is a great similiarity. In Braj there are certain things which had developed on a special basis and lent a new colour to the ceremony. Just to quote an example. I think nowhere else we find the practice of binding and unbinding of the '*Pattar*' which formed a specific part of the big marriage feast and when after the things were served women will name the several meal articles and go on saying that such and such items are chained and towards the end all the articles of food, including those that were not served but which are feast delicacies. Now it was not supposed proper to eat the tied articles so it was to be untied. And this job was performed either by the priest on the side of the bridegroom or a person well trained in the art of extricating the *pattal* from the ties of the women. So he would stand and in very good verses recite lines `extricating the various food articles, and tying, in return the ornaments and the body parts of the women. And pronounce in the end that *pattar* is unbound and that the members of the marriage party could commence eating in a relieved pleasant mood but not before the mouth of the announcer is gagged with sweatmeals, mostly *laddoos*. This *pattar-bandhana* and *pattara kholana* found expression in poetic versification and some persons were specially fond of preparing special verses for the occasion. Many other local formalities formed part of the marriages in Braj and several of them are described by the poets while mentioning the marriage of Radha and Krishna, which is said to have never taken place (though Radha and Krishna are perpetually united) and the *Rukaminimangalas*, many of such descriptions by the devotees of Krishna are available among manuscripts.

14. *Braj parikrama* : A round of the Braj area in a prescribed way is also a part of the Braj culture for it gives expression to several of our cultural activities and brings them within the reach of many of the people who are away from it. The *yātra* as the party performing the *parikrama* is called, goes from place to place into the interior of the area and spreads the Braj culture. Besides there are some regular performances such as the *Rāsalilas*, the recitation of the sacred texts, lectures by learned *goswamis*, and mutual discussions

on several topics of religious and cultural importance. The organisation of the *yātra*-party is a task in itself as it caters to the need of several persons of different levels and to keep the *yātra* going according to the prescribed schedule. I have noted that arrangements for the *Brajyātra* are much better done and organised than for many other types of these organisations. Professor Ensink of the Groningen University in the Netherlands has done lot of work on the organisation of the pilgrimages and to him I have often said that from organisational point of view the *Brajyātras* are, perhaps, the best organised. I feel that *yātras* began with a definite purpose of knowing the Braj area fully well and to spread the holy gospels of Krishna cult with all its culture in the interior of the land.

15. *Nikunjlila* : the playfulness of the celestial couple, Radha and Krishna has become a part of the various religious sects of Braj. It is thought that the playfulness is eternal and it is a *Nityalīla*, the *līla* of each day which can be witnessed only by the holy ones and when these people die it is described as being one with the *Nikunjlila* or entered into it. The utmost desire of a devotee is to view this play of the couple, *yugala*, as it happens and forget all the other things. Some are said to have attained that highest bliss and when they leave the worldly body they are supposed to have entered into the *nityalīla* of the blissful couple. These *līlas* are going on without any stoppage but are invisible to the ordinary eye. It can only be seen by the blessed few. To give it an ordinary presentation they have devised the *Rāsalilas* performed by trained young boys in whom the audience seems to have the same respect as in the actual figures of the diety.

16. *Trees and Vegetation—flora and fauna* : some of the trees are peculiar to Braj; for example, the *Kadamba* tree is to be found in this area alone and its pleasant smell is to be experienced here only. The tree is said to have special significance as it was grown and nurtured by lord Krishna himself in response to the demands of the *gopis* who refused to pour buttter on the traditional big leaves while the small ones were too small and consequently this trees with medium size of leaves came in Land. The tree is peculiar to the region. Even now its sweet smell can be experienced in a grove of *Kadamba* trees. So is the grass of this area having a different type with

the fragrance of its own. The grass is being used by the unmarried girls for the worship of goddess Parvati on a particular occasion called *Gangaur*. Further we must know about the *Kunj* or the cluster of trees and creepers which give colour to the entire Braj atmosphere; the *Kunj* of the Braj with the creepers and trees are of great significance for Krishna is said to have made good use of them. And so is the tree of *Kareel* which has no leaves but only thorns but not to be found in any other place. The special quality of this tree is that it burns even when it is not dry. The Braj forests and wild places are peculiar and you may have an experience of it even now when you take the journey of Mathura to Vrindaban by a *tonga* or on foot, you are bound to say it is now Braj. What a good use was made of this area by Krishna and his playmates when they took the cows to graze in this area and when they themselves busied in playing all sorts of rural games on the trees and in the groves spreading over long distances and large areas.

17. *Symbolism* : It does not form part of culture apparently but when interpreted properly it falls within the range of culture. Symbols are of several types and they reveal several of the cultural ideas and the inner side of individuals. The symbols, for example, inside the temple are intended to bring out several notions concerning religion and the ways of living in society. The literary symbols are of another importance often found in the Krishna poetry; as matter of fact some are inclined to take the entire cult in a symbolic way and try to give things a different meaning apart from what they indicate apparently even the episode of Krishna with Radha and the cowherd boys and girls are interpreted in a symbolic way. The symbolism of the religious notions, the *rāsalila*, the plays, several stories connected with the celestial couple, the sportive nature of Krishna and *gopis* and so many other things can be expressed and are expressed in a symbolic way and that justifies its semiotic nature as well.

18 *Food Habits* : Food habits vary in India and Braj is no exception. Just to point out one article of food—*Maheri* or *Rawari* which is made of maize, barley, *bajara* or *jawar* is baked on the previous evening before and when the liquid gets solidified it is taken with milk or buttermilk to serve as a

good substantial breakfast which is very light, very refreshing and to many very delicious in taste. So also there are *chhak* and *ghaiya*—two items to show the names of the type of meals. *Chhak* is the midday meal often carried along with them when the boys go out in the morning for grazing the cows to be consumed at midday or which is brought to the fields and forests by girls for the use of their brothers and elders at midday. *Ghaiya* is a kind of milk diet taken direct from the udders of a cow as the milk comes out into the open mouth. Since Braj is the land of the cows and its culture has often been dubbed as the cow culture, milk plays an important part in the making items of food. Milk and milk products are the main industry of the place, the chief being butter, of which Krishna was so very fond of, about whom there are so many stories.

19. *Hatari* : I think this item is also peculiar to Braj and has been described in several places by the poets for it used to be an incident in the life of Radha who was ever united and yet not united to Krishna. *Hatari* has several meanings and the one meaning is a sort of house model built of mud on the occassion of the festival of *Diwali* and put for worship alongwith the worship of Ganesha and Lakshami. This model is filled with all kinds of sweets and the *kheel*, a rice preparation obtained after its being fried in the dry hearth. *Hatari* is also a type of semi-religious sport played by girls when they put on good clothes and go together to collect flowers and spread them at some places. There are passages to show how it became important in the area and Radha herself took to it with her friends and went out for collections.

20. *Other festivals* : India is a land of festivals and to the Hindu each day turns out to be a festival day either of a religious nature or of some social importance. *Holi* has been described earlier and besides I can name several other festivals, like *Diwali, Dashehra, Sawan Teej, Rakshabandhan, Janamashthami, Gangaur, Ramanaumi, Akhetij*, and many others. There are several communities in India and most of them have festivals according to their faith and practices. Some of the festivals which are of a national character are observed by all the people but in Braj the most festivals are those of the Hindus. But most of the festivals are related to religion and

this gives these festivals character and greater significance in the life of the Braj people. Here I am reminded of one festival which has an educational slant with religious bias. This called *dandachauth*, a festival of the students who worship Ganesha and go round the town reciting some verses of a humorous and benedictive character and offer of some gifts to the traditional teacher. The festival is now on its wane and some persons have forgotten it completely but in some of the Braj villages it continues to be observed with the same fervour and the play of the '*daṇḍas*' with the accompaniment of the boys' songs to the beat of the drum and the leadership of the traditional *pundit*.

21. *Bath and dress* : Bathing habits in our country are different from the other countries. We do not need hot and closed baths but can have bath in the ponds, in the rivers, in lakes, and in the open places in our houses. Now each house tries to provide bath rooms in the house and the conception of open baths is receding in the background whereas in colder countries like European countries they try to get opportunity to have a both outside their closed spaces. In Braj the open air bath is quite different with proper covers and precautions. A bath in the holy rivers in case of Braj in the holy Yamuna is a sacred act and we look forward to such holy dates when the bath is supposed purify people. So far as the dresses are concerned, they differ from individual to individual but the cowherd boys had the same type of dress and can now be seen only in the *lilas* because the traditional ways are gone and there are paid persons to look after the cows. Other dresses are also there but they are undergoing a rapid change and the dresses described in the available texts may remain to be only mere descriptions. The *dhoti and Mirjai* in the case of men and the *loogari* or *pharia-lhenga* in the case of women was very much in common but now the *sari* is fast taking place doing away with the *pharia-lhenga* dress in the case of women and shirt and pants in the case of men. It so appears that semiotics of Braj culture may better be seen the written texts and not so much in the actual culture prevailing now.

22. *A Couple in Braj* : The way of living and behaviour of a couple forms part of the culture of a population. The traditional Braj couple was the *gopa and gopi*, who looked to

the profession of trading in the cows. Men would take the cows out, milch them, prepare the fodder and bring things from the market. The woman was responsible for turning the milk into yogart, *churning* the yogart, taking out the butter, make butter into *ghee* and selling the various milk products in the larger towns and places nearby. It was on this point that Krishna had his own way and would not allow a *gujari* or a *gopi* to sell her articles without giving some part of them to him. *Dānalila* as it has been narrated forms such a case. The couple, were traditional and were never allowed to adopt the modern way of married people. They could meet only with great difficulty without disturbing the temperament of the elders. The meetings, with difficulty, are sometimes described by the poets and in the instance of Radha and Krishna we learn of the several ways that were employed to make such a meeting possible. The couple was simple, devoted to the marriage vows, respectful to elders and the members of the family; the woman doing most of the work of the household with proper respect to the elders and due consideration to all the other members and very often to guests of the house. There was the observance of the *purdah* and a sight of the partner sometimes was such a consolation to the other. The children that were born were looked after by the grandparents and the parents have nothing to do with their children, so much so that they were never seen with their own children and could fondle them only when the grandparents were not there. The couple was always desirous of having a male child and the elders were not satisfied if there were girls alone. Sometimes if there were no issues it was a practice to marry a second time and the first one continued to live in rather disgrace.

23. *Baṇsuri, Venu, Murli* : The well-known flutes used by Krishna go by these names. The flute of Krishna has been identified as a living symbol and many of the saints are supposed to be the incarnation of this flute. The flute was also to have a greater possession on its blower, Krishna, than even Radha who often complains that most time is occupied upon the Bansuri with the result that her beloved is not able to give her more time. It is said to be the co-wife of Krishna with great haughtiness often asking Krishna to press her feet and continue kissing constantly, which only means that while

blowing the flute its holes are played upon and the blowing is done by the lips. There is some difference between the three types of flutes but leaving *venu* which is mostly made of a horn the other two are alike and are from a bamboo. In all pictures and idols Krishna is seen, often, with his favourite flute. The style of flute playing was also peculiar when the player would bend down in several positions and stand cross-legged. It was, also used for calling the cows back from the pasture at the time of going back home. Krishna would stand on a raised ground, a mound or so, and from there would call the names of the cows through the flute. Importance is givēn in the cult to this flute and it is given the same amount of honour and respect as other members of the society of Krishna. Radha was often in the habit of taking the flute by stealth and caused great trouble to Krishna who very much liked his musical instrument. She would give the flute back only after getting several promises from Krishna. It seems Radha got some satisfaction when the flute was away but Krishna felt bad in its absence.

24. *Sikh-nakh* : I include these descriptions in the category of culture because they have only a poetic fancy but reveal the inner feelings and artistic talents of the individual. It has been a practice with Indian poets to mention the various parts of the body, generally, of a woman but sometimes man also and give a description of their refinement through several attributes in order to bring out the beauty of the person and to inform others or the readers what glamour the person possessed. There are times when the poets of my category will enter into these details because they were dealing not with ordinary beings but those who surpassed all human beauty but in their descriptions they had to be on the normal basis because otherwise it would not make that appeal which was needed for a personal attachment. This practice later became a part and parcel of the erotic poets who used the device for purposes of excitement and to give descriptions of rather a traditional type which if held in reality will not make a real appeal to the other person; for example a waist like the stem and sometimes the fibre of the lotus was too much to give existence to a woman or the hair being serpents of cobra type will frighten away an individual or for that matter the neck being the long

beak of a stork will appear ridiculous. But the poet has his own way and the figurative details so given are to express the extreme of thinness or length or the glossiness of the human bodily parts.

25. *Informational* : There are many occasions when the poets have given just descriptions to bring home several cultural activities and facts of the Braj area. The expression of the feelings of the *gopis* on one hand and the activities of the loyal servants of Kanśa on the other or the wailings of Nanda and Yashoḍa give ventilation to the type of thinking and the mode of behaviour which was a part of the life in the Braj area. At places it has been described how individuals felt on important occasions or events took place in the face of certain situations, or what changes were brought about as a result of discussions. All these go to make it convenient to gauge the depth of human heart and the culture which prevailed in the Braj. Here I am reminded of the detailed description outside the city of Mathura which was the main town and from which we learn of the external activities of the inhabitants. Some information is gathered from the gestures made by the various part of the body. It has been mentioned in certain verses that Krishna and Radha made full use of the gesture language, so much so that the meeting place of the couple in between Barsana and Nandgaon is called even now *Sanket* or gesture. Only sometime back I happened to watch on television screen the life led by the Bushman in the desert of Kalahari and was amazed to observe what good use the people made there of gestures mainly by the gestures of fingers specially at the time of hunting a girrafe or a deer which alone was the means of their getting food. No sound could be made for that would drive away the animal and the family would have to face starvation.

26. *Vrindaban* : This sacred and most important of the area which is said to be ever dear and near to Krishna and where he always resides and carries out his sportive activities with his inseparable partner Radha and their playmates is the place round which the entire structure of Braj culture is woven. There are several compositions which speak about this celestial city which is more than heaven itself. Its praises have been

sung in many sacred texts and the poets and separate compositions like *Vrindaban shat*, *Vrindaban hazara* exist in the manuscript libraries. If we see the Vrindaban of today, I think an idea can be easily formulated about the Braj culture as to what it had been and how it is attempting to exist even in the adverse days of materialism and town culture or the western way of living. In the days of the *holi* festival or during the rainy season when innumerable devotees gather together or pay a casual visit to the town we can find out what the civilization stands for and how it continues to present a picture of the past. It is true there is a change and Braj, or for that matter Vrindaban has also undergone a change but yet some ideas or earlier traits can be gathered from here. The Braj songs, the swinging of the deity, the formation of coloured designs, the sports of Radha and Krishna, the language and expressions of the area, the forms of worship and *holi* recitations, the chanting of the *Brajbhasha* songs, the *galis* or the lanes of a special nature, the exposition of the sacred texts, the distribution of the alms on a large scale, the trips to the nearby holy places, the existing groves from some hundreds of years, the ways of offerings to the diety, the preparation of the big meals to the diety, the throbbing of heart on getting the sacred influence of the place and the several types of performances, the visits to the temples, the various facets of Krishna's life exhibited through the *Rāsalilas*, the traditional dresses, the forests and the trees described as the part and parcel of the area, the meandering flow of the river Yamuna, the special tree called *kadamba*, the circuitous routes of the lanes—all throw a light on the culture of Braj and which has been described by the Rajasthani poets devoted to the Krishna cult. It is better experienced than read in books.

27. *Radha* : She is the very soul of the Braj culture—it is through her that we are attracted to the Braj area and it is said that if we can learn any thing about Braj and its culture it can only be through her grace with which the life of the area throbs. It is a curious phenomenon that Radha was just the playmate of Krishna but the two are ever inseparable; we cannot think of the one without the other. We have heard of Juno's swans but they were much more for there is no distinction between the two—the two, infact, are only one. The

conception of Radha is said to be of recent origin and several scholars have worked on the idea of her being brought into literature as an integral part or the entire part of Krishna but to Braj Radha is a symbol of the supreme attainment and her name is bliss. The form of salutation in Braj is '*Radhe-Radhe*' and she is supposed to be all powerful with the gift of relieving man from all the woes of the world. She is the surest cure for all difficulty and with her benedictions we can attain what we aspire most in this world and in the other world. Some people are so much devoted to her that they think we may leave apart Krishna but Radha is a must. She is the head of the *gopis* and many of the devotees of Krishna undergo the *gopībhāva* when they have the attire and behaviour of a woman because they believe in the concept that there is only one man in the world and that is Krishna; all others are women. The story goes that when Mira wanted to meet one of the *goswami* she was refused a meeting on the plea that the *goswami* never meets women, Mira sent back the words—'today I have known that you are also a man, so far I thought there was only one man and that was the Lord'. These words so affected the *goswami* that he ran to see Mira and admitted his mistake in the open.

28. *Mathura* : This big city plays an important part in development of the culture of the place because it was the only big town, the capital of Braj, the place of the fight between Krishna and Kansa. The present Mathura is fast developing into a modern city but the descriptions of this town which we find in the manuscripts available in some of the palaces very much reveal the city's cultural aspects. I got one very good book which deals with the arrival of Krishna with his uncle Akrura on the biddings of the ruler, Kansa. As they approached the town they observed the outskirts and the busy life of the town and that gives an idea what the town was like and what could be its culture. One description in which the small places outside the town, called *bagichi*, deserves special mention for to those standards the Brijvasis were living till quite some years past. The *bagichi*, I think, is very peculiar to Braj. This is a sort of afternoon life and activity of a man of the town. It was thought that a toilet and bath in the open was a very healthy practice and no toilet

was thought proper before a drink, called *thandai* (without a stimulant) and *Bhang* (with a stimulant) was prepared and drunk by the individuals gathering there. The shops give an idea not only of the affluence of the place but of the articles that were used by the population. The industries are also described and the professions followed are given in detail.

29. *Vehicles* : Fast vehicles were not developed and there was no need for the same for the villages could carry on with the products of the place. It was only occasionaly there arose the necessity for going to big towns for approaching the authorities or on some special mission. In such cases carts were used. When Krishna was taken to Mathura, Akrura came in a chariot. A chariot could be drawn by horses or by bullocks. This was the vehicle for higher people in the society. For ordinary ones either a ride on the horse or a cart, of a very ordinary type drawn by bullocks was used. Bullocks were key pins in Braj economy and the cow was there to meet their needs. It was, perhaps, for this reason that great sanctity came to be attached to the cow. For war purposes the vehicles used were of four descriptions—the elephant, the horse, the chariot and sometimes the camel. For quite a long time these types of vehicles continued and for shorter distances going on foot was the only alternative.

31. *Colours* : Several colours were used in the area. Some of the colours were direct from the earth; for example '*geru*' the red colour, '*chuna*' the white colour and '*kajal*' the black colour. Even now use is made of these colours. Horses are coloured by them; for study the black and white stuffs were provided by them; on auspicious occasions paintings on the ground were done with them. But for colouring dresses and other clothes there were several colours and Braj is known for plenty of colours used by women for their dresses. The colour of the head dress of man was also to be noted and the caps of young ones were made from several colours. Surdas has given good descriptions of the colourfulness of the Braj life and when he describes the cap of Krishna he alludes to several colours of which the single cap was made. He gives a figurative description of the whole thing. In several texts we come across colours and in many cases colours made in different ways and the ones made by the combination of two

or more. There are separate books which lay emphasis on colour alone.

31 *Seasons* : The Braj seasons have a specific cultural appeal. And there are festivals and celebrations in honour of each season. The spring is well-known for *holi*, summer takes us to sacred rivers, the winter is full of nice feasts, the autumn has the festival of lights, besides there are several celebrations according to seasons. Dresses also change with the change of seasons. From *holi* we take up to summer dress and from *Diwali* we start the winter clothes, and so is the case with variety of food. *Bajara* is preferred in winter and *satua* in summer. Many other things undergo a change with the change of seasons which leads plenty of changes in the modes of living and behaviour. We have six seasons and the poets have given due attention to the type of changes that occur. In fact, they have taken up the significance of each month and we have quite a number of *barahamasa* describing the special features of the area. There are *barahamasas* attributed to Radha and to Krishna but the more frequent is that of *barahamasa* attributed to the female partners. It has also been taken into consideration what changes are there when the beloved is at home and when he or she is away. This literature is to be found quite in abundance and a systematic study is bound to throw useful light on the cultural aspects of the area.

There are so many other items on which a consideration from the cultural point of view is possible and it is needed that a full study is carried out to draw out the salient features of the culture of an area on the basis of what the authors felt and experienced. Literature is said to be the mirror of life and we have good reflections of life from the writings of poets who possess a better sense of penetration into the activities of man. It is said that a poet can reach a place where even the rays of the sun do not reach. I think, therefore, a deep study of the poetic feelings and an interpretation of his writing is the surest way of getting at the roots of the culture of a section of society which a particular poet has taken into his mind to explain and this is the reason why an attempt at this place is being made to develop semiotics of Braj culture on the basis of poetic compositions of Rajasthan with reference of their devotion to the cult which forms the backbone of the Braj area—Krishna cult. It is not easy to separate poetic fantasy from the actual facts of life but it is possible to interpret the poetic compositions to the extent possible on the basis of observation. The poet is certainly more imaginative and full of fantasy and his descriptions may speak things with added sentimentalism but experience and study can make it possible to give due allowance to the poetic imagery and bring out the facts very near to actuality.

6

FACETS OF BRAJ CULTURE

Out of the several facets of culture I would like to consider just some important ones, dealing directly with the Braj area. I propose to take up religion, society, civic life, nature, arts, sports and some literary aspects. In religion I shall take up :

1. the way of naming the deity;
2. the various forms of the deity;
3. the places assigned;
4. the forms of worship and the procedure thereof;
5. fixing up of the forehead marks;
6. serving meals to the deity;
7. the round of the Braj area;
8. the place given to Radha and symbolism; and
9. the sportive activities in the groves—*nikunjalila.*

Society is the basis of culture and in dealing with it I shall talk about :

1. the Braj couple;
2. bath and dresses;
3. cosmetics and ornaments;
4. articles and types of food;
5. marriage ceremony and some other rites;
6. festivals in general; and
7. the festival of *Holi*;

Civic life consists of the city life and the life in villages. I shall try to give under this :

1. the city life as found in the main city of Mathura;
2. naming of men;
3. names of women;
4. names of the cows;
5. the names and formation of colours;
6. other names;
7. use of colours;
8. vehicles; and
9. informational texts.

Nature occupied an important place in the Braj life and mention will be made of :

1. the centre of Braj, namely Vrindaban, with reference to its places;
2. the trees and creepers;
3. the seasons.

The artistic side of the area has been prominent and I shall attempt to give some information with regard to :

1. the Pichhwai
2. the musical instruments;
3. the flutes—*bansuri*, the *venu*, the *murli* and the like;
4. *sanjhi* may also be added.

Sports play an important role in the life of individuals, specially the youngers in the society. I try the following :

1. The main *games* in the forest—the *bhadududu*, *ankh-michauli*;
2. *sanjhi*; and
3. *hatari*.

Some form of *literary* activity is always there in discharge of duties and obligations and also the daily routine of life. I shall make a mention of :

1. some idioms and expressions peculiar to the area;
2. symbolic expressions;
3. the description of *sikh-nakh*—head to toe; and
4. the growth of sentimentalism.

Culture of an area is a full description of the life and the activity of the people in general and all those who occupy positions in society including poets, artists, painters, doctors, educationists, the administrators, engineers, the designers, the dancers and singers, the folk-art specialists, the ordinary workers and almost everyone who form part of the society in all its activities in the several fields from the beginning to the end of social structure. I found that in the Braj area there are several things which can be taken under this caption but a limit has to be put and a selection, therefore, was necessary. But we cannot forget the performance of *Rasālīlas* from the culture of Braj and some references will be made to this performance as well. The various sects of the Krishna cult have lent their quota to the formation of the Braj culture and a glimpse into their activities forms part of the Braj culture. But my limit is the manuscript literature of the Rajasthan poets and in this light certain restrictions have become necessary and I have tried to move within the imposed limits.

RELIGION

Naming of the Diety

Although to the devotees of the Krishna cult, the main deity is Lord Krishna and his eternal companion Radha; the names which are assigned to the deity are several governed by several factors, such as the place, some special attribute of the lord, the way of establishing a temple, the mode of obtaining the idol of the deity, the age of the deity, the wishes of the worshippers, the way in which worship is performed, etc. For example I found a manuscript in the RORI Manuscripts library at the Alwar branch numbered as 339. It was entitled '*Banarūpabihārīji kau Vilāsa*'. It refers to a temple inside the present Government campus and is named as the temple of Shri Banarupabihariji. How the temple was named is the theme of the manuscript giving all the minute details. It is a manuscript by a Brahman poet, not known so far, Vipra Bejāna, who says that

> *Mahārāni kau jasa pragaṭa kiyau bipra baijāna*
> *mandira kī upamā kahi dharama karma mẽ dhyāna*

and the manuscript was completed in 1910 V.E. The temple, according to the date in the manuscript, came into existence on 1904 V.E. Baisakha sudhii 9, on Thursday. How the temple came to be so named is very aptly described in the book. The entire story need not be repeated but it is worth mentioning that the name of the ruler of Alwar State at that time was Banaisimha and his *rāni* was named Rupakawari, who was the daughter of the ruler of Shahapur. She expressed the desire for building a temple as she was advised to do so in a dream. The ruler agreed to the wishes of his wife and the temple was duly constructed. The idol of Krishna was consecrated and as for a name the *pundits* thought that since the ·temple was completed by the ruler and his wife it was appropriate to name after them and so they adopted half from the name of Banaisimha and half from the name of the *rāni* Rupakawari, which resulted in Bana + Rupa=Banarupa and Bihariji is of course the name of the diety hence the name of the deity and that of the temple. I assign a more importance to this manuscript for it tells the history of those times regarding its political and religious situation and describes the architectural designs. All the facts of the times of Banaisimha (Vinayasimha) are recorded there. He was the ruler who produced the first commentary, yet unknown to most critics, and discovered by the author of these lines, on the very famous book '*Bhāshābhūshaṇa*' written by the ruler poet of Jodhpur, Jasawantsimha.

Many such examples can be quoted to prove how the deity and the temples were named. Birla temples are also an example of the type indicating that the Birlas are responsible for the erections of these temples. Some temples are also known by the type of constructions. A temple in Vrindaban is called the temple of crooked pillars, '*terhekhabhawala*' perhaps very few know the exact name. Some temples are by the colour of the idol, as *goredauji* or *kaledauji* and so on.

The forms or svarupa of the deity

Apart from the names of the temples, the forms of the deity also deserve mentioning. In certain sects the forms owe their origin from earlier times as for example the seven or the eight houses of the Vallabha sect with the definite places assigned to the diety with the families of the sons of Bitthalanathaji. The seven *svarupas* are so mentioned by poet Pravina in a manuscript available at the Kota branch of the RORI and numbered 3583. The manuscript was prepared for Kedaranatha of Sulatanpur in Kota.

He says that :

> *āge navanītapriyta bāi or Mathureśa*
> *āge biṭṭhaleśa banyo byota chabi bhārī kau*
> *dāhinī or dwārakeśa gokuleśa āge tihī*
> *dāhinau svarūpa manamohana bihārī kau*
> *gokula ke chanda Mathuresajī baī or*
> *darasa Pravīna sukhakārī kau*
> *manau chandra vṛindana mẽ chandramā birāje jaise*
> *raje sukhakanda mukhachanda giradhārī kau*

or as at another place

> *śrī Mathureśa śrī gokulachandramā beṭhe barābara*
> *rūpa ujyāre śrī biṭṭhaleśa śrī manmathamohana bāī*
> *diśa mẽ base chabi bhāre dāhinī or śrī gokulanāthajī*
> *bīcha mẽ śrī navanīta piyāre bāla govardhanajī*
> *barabhāga ke mandira sāta sarūpa padhāre*

This is a quotation from another composition by the same author in Manuscript no. 3584 in the same library. Besides these seven *svarupas* there is the eighth one of śri Aṣhṭama Lalajī.

These seven/eight forms of the deity are assigned different places of which five are larger—Nathadwara, Kankroli, Kamabana, Surata and Ahmedabad. Nathadwara and Kamabana have two forms each. Besides there are some more places mentioned in the manuscript by *Goswami* Ramanalala Baba : Anyora, Govardhana, Udaipur, Jodhpur, Chopasani, Bundi, Kota, Shergarha, Krishnagarha, Gokul, Mathura, Kashi, Mamai, Gadawar, Rajanagar, Bharocha, Khiralu, Biramgaon, Dholaka, Amareli, Ghora, Amareti, Mohamo, Patana, Junagarh, Porebunder, Rajakota, Navsnagar, Mandavi, Bhuja, etc. This leads to the conclusion that the practice of naming and placing the deity had a background which caters to the culture of the place or the belief held by a part of the society.

The forms of worship and the procedure thereof

Great attention was devoted to the forms of worship and the procedure of the same was well defined. In all the sects, generally, the procedure is prescribed and it is a bit modified or elaborated on festive days; there too it varies from occasion to occasion. Rasikamani in his manuscript *Nityakṛiṭya sevāmārga* says in a particular context—(in prose)

> *pāche jhāri pheri bharāi rājabhoga dhari tulasi śankhodaka kariye. Rājabhoga kī dhāra mẽ bhāta mūga bhāve dāri hoi so chamchāh sõ ghī lekẽ thākura ke āge sāni dhārano eka kaṭori mẽ śitakala mẽ tātau suhātau ushṇakala mẽ śitala jala bhari thāra pāsa dhariye.*

Besides the serving of the *bhoga* it was necessary to adhere to certain rules in the use of garments. The following method is prescribed for the clothes :

> *prathama tau vastra siddha karane sāṛi komala uttama cholī atalsa kī tamẽ eka śyāma lāla do õṛhanī kora lagāi dhotī uparaṇā jori eka paṭukā komala thāneśvarī phẽṭa bāndhive kõ* . . . and thus for other garments.

For bathing the diety the same manuscript mentions the procedure thus :

> *śankha sõ yā krama sõ snāna kārāvanau-*
> *dūdha dahī ghṛita madhu būrā pheri dūdha pheri śītala jala thoṛau sau — yā prakara śankha sau snāna karāi śankha pahughī para dhariye.*

For different dates also there are prescribed procedures. I mention a little about the day before *Janmāshṭhamī* and the festival of Baladevajī :

> *'janamāṣṭhamī ke pahale dina rājabhoga mẽ sirā nitya ke bhoga tẽ adhika mẽ āve madhya ārtī piche prabhuna kau sṛiṅgāra baṛau karive kau chokī para padhārāi baṛau simhāsana bāhira kāṛhiye*
>
> *Magasira sudi 15 kū śri Baladevaji kau Utsava—singāra nila meghaśyāma bāgā kuṇḍala sāmagri singara kau nema nahī ichā āve so.*

And these things hold good for so many festivals that are observed in the temples. Some of the festivals are—*Janamāshṭhami, Rādhāshṭhami, Vāmanadvādaśi, naumi, Vijayadaśami,* *Rasipunyāu, Dhanaterasa, Rupachaudasa, Dipamālikā, Govardhana, Bhāibija, Gopāshṭami, Prabodhini, Makarasaṁkrānti, Basantapanchamī, Holi, Dola, Ramanaumi, Meshasankrānti, Akshayatṛitiya, Nṛsiṁhachaudasa, Jeṭhadaśeharā, Snānayātra, Rathayātra, Sūryagrahaṇa, Grastāsta,* etc.

The details of procedure are very elaborate in the Vallabha sect and to the Radhavallabha sect but they are also in a prescribed way in the other sects though the rigour does not seem to be so great in other cases. There very many treatises mentioning the procedure for the several festivals that are observed in the temples and great care is taken in celebrating them. This shows the sense of elaboration and observing minute details which formed the character of the area. Some of the social and family events, too, were elaborate. The methods followed in the temples lent colour to family living also. To quote for instance the fasts and feasts observed in the temples were also common among the people. The food items even were the same as found in the kitchens of the diety. The idea of *sakhari* and *nikhari* for example is a loan from the temples; so is also the practice of having *chaukā* for preparing meals.

Forehead marks—tilaka, chandana

Application of *tilaka* and *chandana* forms a major part of the religious practices in the area. It is said that a forehead without the *chandana* was like a place for cremation. The *tilaka* was said to be the representation of the deity or the mark of the sacred feet of the deity and various symbolic meaning were given to the forms, the colours, the lines, the rounds, the heights, etc., of these marks. They were a part of our culture. Men and women, both made use of them on a regularly. There were different prescriptions and they were used according to the faith which one favoured or the status of a woman in the society, unmarried, married, widow, etc.

Bhog of the Deity

'*Bhoga*' as it is called is an elaborate affair in the temples. Must it be so elaborate? is a question often asked. They say that our aim is to propitiate the lord and we use our best means to do so. Offering food is also a means, although we know that all these articles are the gift of the lord but we serve saying '*tvadiyaṁ vastu govindaṁ tubhyamev samarpitaṁ*', —your things, O Govinda are being offered to you. But a change is taking place and people begin to complain that it is just the way for keeping up the selfish motives of the priests and temple authorities. This feeling has not encroached into minds of the Braj and it is felt a sacred duty to arrange big meals to the deity. This is the reason why *Chappanbhoga*, *Annakūṭa*, *Kunḍhvārā*, etc., are arranged by several devotees apart from the everyday *bhoga* to the deity.

In manuscript '*Chappanbhoga tatparya*' obtained from Kota RORI branch (no. 3421) we have the following indications—

mevā saba bhăti ke magāiye
saka jitane milẽ titane mangāiye
pakavāna saba bhăti ke siddha karāiye
jina dina mẽ phula ko bhara hoi tina dina mẽ
Uttama dina dekhi utsava karaṇõ

choba, abīra, chandana, māla, vastra—itnau sṛingāra sāmagri kau
bhoga ke liye rāmapātra bahuta măgai rākhe
saba siddha kari gorasa saba bhăti siddha karvāi uttama dina dekhi utsava karānau
bīṛā-māla-vastra băṭiye kachu āpa rākhiye pīche bhkūha hoi tau prasāda līje

Similarly in *Ṛasāśiromaṇi* Mahārājā Rāmasimha says—

miṭhāī kau bīṛā 4 dhariye chakatta dhăkiye śri pādukājī kau śrimukha ughāṛiye pattari, 2 bichāiye bhoga dhariye sikharana baṛī chāvara kī khīra būdi jalebi ko ṭokarā meda kī pūri sirā kau rāmakaṭorā dhobā dāri miṭhau syāka bilsārū kī hăḍī aura jitanau bhoga prabhuna kū āve titanau śrī śrī padukājī kū āve kahā sakhṛi kahā unasakhaṛi

(*sakhaṛi* and *unasakhaṛi* deserve explanation. All the fried things to which *ghee* is applied while they are being prepared come in the first category but those things to which ghee is applied later, such as *chapāti*, *roṭī*, *chāvala*, *khīra*, *dāla*, *kaṛhi*, etc., fall in the second category).

This manuscript attributed to the ruler of Jaipur was scribed by Ramagopal a resident of Maujapur and came into existence in V.E. 1912, though it was completed in 1830. May be got at Chandanmahala Library, Jaipur.

In the manuscript—'*Srī gokulachandramāji ke ghara kī utsava mālikā*' which is in prose there are good details with regard to the food articles which are to be served to the deity and in several places quantity and methods of preparation are also mentioned. Mostly these details are with reference to the Vallabha sect and if some more information is needed it is possible to get it from the workers in the temple of Shrinathaji in Nathdwara. Some details about the food articles and their preparation will be given under the heading 'Meals : articles of food'. It must, however, be noted that *bhoga* occupies an important part in the worship of the deity and that arrangements are always made for *bhogaraga* whether the temple is by private individuals or by some sect organisation or by the state.

The Braj Parikrama

Many people are interested the *yātras* in India. I have good academic relations with a team of Dutch scholars who are working on the *Ayodhya yātra* and they have covered some *yātras* already but my conviction, after seeing their work and method of working, is that they should try to go into the details of the *Brajyātras* where the details are so well available and which even now can be seen in observing the rules laid down as long back as the year 1543 A.D. and about which manuscripts can be obtained in several manuscript collections. In the head office of the Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute situated at Jodhpur there are several manuscripts to that effect and one of them (no. 5204) about *vanayātra* which runs '*śri gokulanāthaji apane sevakana sõ kahata hẽ samvat 1600 bhādrapada dvādasī yaha vanayātra parikramā śrī gusāĩji kari so śrī gokulanāthajī apane sevakana sõ kahata hẽ jo vaishṇava hoya vanayātra. vanayatra parikramā chorāsikosī kī mukhya sthala hẽ so saba dekhe taba braj kau svarūpa janyau pare . . . .*'.

The book gives very good details from which it is learnt that the chief places are—*vana 12, upavana 24, charaṇachinha 7, svāminījī ki thaura 2, pōkharī 6, mahādeva 8, parvata 6, hinḍora thaura 6, sarovara 5, dānathaura 6, devī 8, kūpa 11, silā 11, kunḍa 89*

The names of the *vanas* are — Madhuvana, Tālávana, Kamodavana, Bahūlavana, Kāmavana, Khidravana, Vrindāvana, Bhadravana, Bhandīravana, Belavana, Lohavana, Mahāvana (12).

And the *upavanas are* — Gokula, Gordhana, Adīga, Śrikuṇḍa, Parāsolī, Bilachū, Paramadara, Uchogāon, Nandagāma, Khesana, Ajanīpur, Karahalā pisāyo, Gandharva, Bachchha, Ādibadri, Sekhasāī, Kokilā, Dīgha, Koṭha, Māṭa, Khabala, Tāla, Rāmatāla (24).

One Senapati Bahādura made good observations on the texts and practices in this connection and it is mentioned in the *Mathurā Māhātmya* written in 1886 V.E. that after thorough research the number of places for the *Brajayātra* are 1064 of which one may try to cover as many as possible and within reach. These are *ghāṭa* 35, *kshetra* 27, *sthāna* 59, *hāū* 4, *vishṇumandir* 191, *śiva* 37, *devi* 28, *pādukā sthāna* 3, *bajaranga* 7, *kūpa* 13, *tālasarovara* 7, *kuṇḍa* 164, *gānapati* 4, *ācāryajī ki beṭhaka* 48, *vanaupavana* 40, *daitya marave ke sthāna* 11, *sūrya* 1, *upadesa* 2, *pradakshinā* 3, *bhagavana ne padārtha khayau so sthāna* 3, *tulasī sthāna* 7, *tapasyā sthāna* 2, *banajātra ke gāma* 114, *kośa* 12, *tīrtha* 1, *vṛiksha* 37, *sṛiṅgāra* 4, *silā* 12, *mūrti nāhi so sthāna* 28, *rāsamanḍala chotarā* 27, *ghāṭi* 14, *darsana ke sthāna* 3, *gau sthāna* 6, *gufā* 2, *gupta* 1, *parvata* 5, *jamadharma* 2, *jamanāji mẽ* 3, *bāga* 4, *jimpā* 1, *ācārajī tẽ eli tarafa* 95, *sodha karanau* 7, *kunjja* 2 = 1064.

This figure work is on the basis of the *yātra* performed by the Senapati as the text goes—*atha Mathurāji kī jātra va vraja chorāsī ke devasthāna chinha vagerā parikramā śrīmanta mahārājādhirāja śri rāvasāhaba yaśavantarāva dābhāṛe sainyāpati bahāduraji ne karī. śri gokulajī gusāī ne parikramā kī pothī vārtika* *banāī tāke anukrama sõ va aura navīna prācina sthāna talāsa karike doū aika miiāi kī kathā kau prārambha vārtika karau.*

The first place of the *yātra* if viśrantaghata of Mathura where after due gifts and vows administered by *goswamiji* the process is to commence and in the end the *yātra* is completed at the same place in Mathura where after proper ablutions, bath, gifts, etc., the chobe is to announce the due completion of the *yātra* and people proceed to their respective homes. The *yātra* forms a major part of the religion of this place and even now thousands of persons, including highly educated individuals join the *yātra* with or without family and get a taste of the area and its culture in several aspects. Several manuscript describe the pilgrimage of the area and from these descriptions we get glimpses of the culture of the place which may be summarised as below—the Braj area is still unchanged, the old places are held in respect, cows form a part of the culture, people have faith in the religious texts, there is great devotion to Radha-Krishna, hospitality is present, means of communication are as of old, family life is the joint family system, ways of living have changed little, dresses continue to be the same but new things are creeping in, villages seem to be changing their character, the effects of modern times are being observed but so far as I have been able to gather the basic notions continue to exist and therein the culture of the place is maintained.

The place of Radha and its symbolism

Radha plays an important part in Braj culture. Some quotations are given below :

> *'aika kiśori kṛipā tẽ jo kachu hoi so hoi'*

'whatever is to happen is possible with the grace of Radha, without her grace nothing is possible'

> *'navala Rādhikā kṛipā bina kesẽ hota nibāha'*

'How can one survive without the grace of ever young Radha' It is supposed that the effects of time are not applicable to Krishna and his eternal companion Radha; they enjoy eternal youth.

'kāhū kẽ bala bhajana kau kāhū kẽ ādhāra
vyāsa bharose kũvari ke sovata pãya pasāra'

Some derive their power by reciting the praises of the lord; others enjoy some good support but Vyāsa (a well-known devotee of the cult) sleeps with his legs spread with the belief in the princess—Radha—he has nothing to bother him—he is all in rest.

And there is a very popular saying—

'Rādhā Rādhā kahata hī saba bādhā miṭa jāya
tīna janama kī āpadā Rādhe nāma liya tẽ jaya'

'All the worries are over with the uttering of the name—Radha, Radha—. The woes of three lives disappear with reciting the name of Radha.

Thus Radha has been given an important place in the cult. There is, however, a controversy as to how and when Radha crept in the sect. Some scholars have worked on the problem and have concluded that Radha has only five hundred years of existence and even in the *Bhagavata* the name of Radha is not to be found though some scholars try to point out the places where her name is suggested. Whatever may be the fact, with the introduction of this great figure in the sect she has wielded a great influence in the sect and Krishna sect looses its singificance if Radha is taken away. I am reminded of the revelation of its symbolic meaning by the well-known saint Prabhudatta Brahmachari who with proper allusions and in a good narrative pointed out that as Krishna is always trying to find out satisfaction, consolation and joy in the personality of Radha and is ever seeking her company in the same way the individual is ever on the search to get peace and solace which alone can give him perfect rest and the fruition of this life. Radha is a part and parcel of the Supreme Being Krishna, the two are inseparable—they may have two bodies which too are often shown as one but the two have one and the same soul. They can never be separated wherever they exist in this world or in their eternal abode. Radha, *gopis*, *gopas*, the playmates, cows, Vrindabana and many other notions going with the name of Krishna have many times been given a symbolic meaning and they point out that the love (which to many seems worldly) is the love of the *jivātama* to *paramātma*. They symbolise the eternal flow of love with which the souls are united and they establish the fact that there is no other entity but the One only. But several devotees are not satisfied with notion, specially the *bhaktas* who try to enjoy the bliss in a more expressed way. They love the lord as a living worldly figure but the idea is maintained that they have great powers and can give to the devotee whatever he desires. The two *bhāvās* often called the *mādhurya* and the *aisvarya* are present simultaneously, and the devotee while inclining to the first is never giving up the second.

About Radha as she is known among the Braj there are several stories. She was the daughter of a nearby chief and used to play with Krishna who had great fancy for her and there are many tales and *lilas* to justify this fact. They were often together and loved each other immensely, but are said to be only friends, never married but the poets of *Brajabhasha* felt very elated on the love they had for each other and we have compositions which describe '*Radhāmangala*' the marriage of Radha with Krishna. And that literature embodies the Braj culture as it prevailed during the times of these compositions and which remained in existence for quite sometime.

Nikunjalila—the sportive activities in the groves

> *nava nikunja mana kau agama sevata koṭi anaṅga*
> *jugala keli ānanda kau tahā akhaṇḍita raṅga*

A *kunja* is a grove made up by several creepers, trees, small plants full of flowers and greenery. The *nikunja* is a special type of blissful *kunja* which is for the enjoyment of the deity. There the '*jugala*' the couple—Radha and Krishna—who busy themselves in continuous play. This new special type of grove is not intelligible even to the mind and it is so beautiful that crores of cupids are serving it. There is the perpetual colourfulness of the happiness which comes out of the sportiveness of the eternal couple. In the more common way the play of the two continues for ever and it gives them eternal joy.

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The trouble is that though imagined this sportive activity is not to be seen by all. It can be only seen if the two are satisfied and allow a devotee to have those special eyes which are needed for observing the *lilas* of the couple. Radha is assigned the place of the goddess of the *Rāsa-rāseśvari* and the other damsels present there are to supplement the activity by joining the dances, playing over the musical instruments, looking to the comfort of the couple, supplying all the needed articles and preparing the atmosphere for this perpetual *rāsa*. It is said that the most blissful are allowed to join the *rāsa* or *lila* activity in the form of the servers of Śriradha or the helpers of Śri Krishna but this position is very difficult to attain and one has to use all his cleverness and all his resources to rise to this position and even then it will depend on the sweet will of the two.

The poets of the cult describe it in the ordinary way of a play for that alone is possible to be understood by the simple devotees. In a reference the poet says—

'*manamohana sohana rijhavāra* *mohana lāgyo nandakumāra*
vau ghāṭa hve āṛo āna *nĕna nikārut bĕṭa samāna*
kahā kahū daiyā kitā jāū *chancaha kũvara chavāī gāū*
mere hū upajata lalachana *nāgariyā rokata kulakāna*'

Mohana has been mentioned as a big dandy who has great powers of attraction and wherever the *gopi* goes he is present there with his protruded eyes which strike like a cane. What shall I do, where shall I go, this playful *kunwar* Krishna is well-known in the village for his mischief. I also feel drawn towards him but I am held up for the sake of the limits of my family. Thus goes on the playful attitude of Krishna to which all are attracted. In an ordinary sense it has only as much appeal as that of ordinary play of a playful youth with the girls of the place. But the *kunjalila* is full of supernatural appeal and in the *kunjas* of Vrindabana, say Madhubana and Sevakunja, these *lilas* are said to be played even now, and each evening preparations are made that the *lila* may go on as ever. This has become more of a formality now but many religious people believe in it, at any rate it points out to the fact that the worship offered to the deity is of a very intimate nature and that through this type the sweet nature and the *mādhurya* of the people is expressed in an impressive way.

The *rāsalīla* performances that form part of the Braj culture seem to remind us of the perpetual nature of the playfulness of the supreme two in the assigned places of Krishna. It is said that it is on account of the facilities of playfulness and nearness to his beloved that Krishna does not go even a step from the bounds of Braj—'*vṛndābanaṁ parityajya pādamekaṁ na gachchhati*'. It is supposed to be the final abode of a devotee and the death of devotees is referred to be the entry into the *nikunjalīla* of the eternal couple.

SOCIETY

The Braj couple

Marriage among the Braj people is through negotiations between respective parents of the groom and bride. Marriage is performed in the traditional style by a priest. Vishnudas in his work '*Rukminimangala*' available in the RORI office Jodhpur (no. 12600) writes :

> '*mohana karata bilāsa mahala mẽ*
> *kanaka mandira mẽ keli karata hẽ aura koī nahī tija pāsa*
> *Rukmini charaṇa paloṭata pī ke pūji mere mana kī āsa*
> *jo chahe thī soī paiyo prabhu pati devakī sāsa*
> *tuma bina aura kauna thau mere dharaṇi pātala ākāsa*'

The lines above tell something of a wife to the members of the family, specially the husband and the mother-in-law

1. the couple is allowed to be together in a palace and sport in the golden palace where there is no third person. This might be true of the royal couple since by that time Krishna had become ruler of Dwaraka but for the ordinary couple in Braj this sort of living is not possible. The couple has to be very careful to mind the wishes of the in-laws; consequently much less time for intimacy. Joint family system prevails here where all live under the same roof and hence there may not be a separate room for the couple.

2. Rukmini is pressing the feet of her husband. This is very true of a Braj wife. Even now '*charaṇseva*' forms a part

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of the duty of a wife. But this also seems to be possible when the couple happens to be elder and when they are the masters of the household. A wife considers and is taught to consider her husband as the highest deity for her. It should be noted that scriptures provide that the only duty of a wife is to serve the husband in all possible ways. For a man great many things are to be done but for wife the only sacred duty to get the perfect bliss is to serve her husband with *manas*, *vak*, *karma*—that is by mind, word and action. She can get the highest perfection if she keeps on to this attitude. I think the Braj wives are very careful to observe this rule.

3. She is satisfied that she got Devaki as her mother-in-law. The fact is that the Braj mother-in-law has not been very kind to the daughter-in-law as a general rule but the literature always speaks good of them. She is supposed to treat her daughter-in-law with greater consideration than her own daughter. Braj respects mother-in-law and the '*bahu*' as the daughter-in-law is called is to perform all the duties of the household. She has to observe *purdah* with the elder members of the family and strangers and is not expected to come out in the presence of such persons. She is to have her face covered to her husband as well when they are in the presence of elders. Braj is maintaining this tradition, perhaps, the most, whereas in others parts of India the veil or the *ghaghaṭa* as it is called in India has disappeared. The dress of the wife is now changing and in place of the former *lhega-phariya* they are seen wearing *saris*. *Sari* was prevalent in earlier times also as a proper costume of the women as there are references to the various colours in which a *sari* can be had and a poet of Kumkera in Rajasthan has given the colours of the *sari* worn in the Braj.

4. The wife has to consider her husband as the only valuable possession she has in this world and later after he is to be her protector. It is a belief that the couples repeat life after life and the prayers of a rightful wife are that she may continue to have the same man as her husband in each life. The Braj culture attaches great importance to the duties of the wife and the expectations of the family are much from the wife—the *kulabadhu*, as she is called. There are differences in status as the

wife grows in the family—as a new wife she is complety dependent on her parents-in-law, later she looks to her husband and still later she can herself play a part in the affairs of the household. If the husband is to die earlier the wife has to look to her sons, if she has any if not she has to be depending on the male members of the house and if that be not possible then in some cases she will go to her own parents but there too she is to look to the wishes of her parents if they are alive if not the brothers and nephews are to be cared for. The conditions are going a steady change now and the wife is sometimes seen working or having her own possessions.

So far as the manuscripts go they speak of a quiet couple where the outside duties are performed by the man and inside the house the woman is to devote her attention. The cases of a second marriage are few in the case of a woman but a man can marry a second time if the first wife dies. In the Braj widow remarriage is yet only an idea and the Braj society seems to be intolerant to such an anti-social act as the remarriage in the case of a woman who had lost her husband even at a younger age. This practice has its own disadvantages as the family life is also undergoing a change and the Braj society has to be ready for this change in the status of a woman. There are very few such cases and the society looks down upon such incidents and the future of this type is still full of darkness.

Bath and dresses

There were several stages of the bath. Some are mentioned by Vishnudas in the following *pada* :

āu gopāla sīgāra banāu
vividha sugandhana karau ubaṭanau pāche uṣhṇa jala le ju nhavau
ā̃ga agochi guhu terī benī phoolana rachi rachi bhāla banāu
surā̃ga pāga jaratāri torā ratana khachita sira pē̃ncha banau
bagau lāla sunaharau chāpau haridrajāra charanana birachāu
paṭuka sarasa baĩjani rāga kau hasulī hema hamela dharāu
gajamotina ke hāra manohara banamāla le ura paharāu

kara le darpaṇa dekho mere bare nirakha nirakha ura nẽna
sirāu
madhu mevā pakavāna miṭhāī apane kara te tumhẽ jimāu
vishṇudāsa kau yahe kṛipā phala bāla līlā hau nisadina gāū

This refers to the morning ablutions of Krishna and his getting ready with the help of his mother. The several stages of getting ready are :

1. Call gopala for getting ready;
2. First *ubatana* is done. It is annointing the child with a kind of dough made from the barley or *rai* flour and mixed with oil and several other herbs. It is rubbed over the body which makes the body smooth and removes all the dirt and dust from the body;
3. Then the bath with warm water;
4. Drying the body with a towel;
5. Tying the tuft of hair on the head;
6. Decorating the forehead with the help of flowers;
7. Putting the turban of embroidered cloth on the head;
8. Putting the golden chain with inlaid precious stones;
9. Making some sort of loops in the turban put on the head;
10. Dressing with red clothes having golden prints;
11. Putting *haridra* on the feet;
12. Tying round the waist a cloth having crimson colour;
13. Putting round the neck three ornaments—*Hasuli*, garland and *Hamela*;
14. Then beautiful garlands made of pearls from the head of the elephant;
15. The *Vanamala*, so dear to Krishna, is put as the final decoration;
16. The boy may see his form in the mirror which he holds in his hand;
17. the mother is feeling immensely happy at the beauty of her son;
18. Then she wants to feed the son with her own hands with sweets, fruits, fried sweets and other sweets; and
19. This *lila* is sung by the poet. This is how the boy gets ready and this indicates the details of the care and fondness for the son entertained by their mothers. Bathing and

dressing both are described in the above verse, but this is with regard to a child only for the mother is playing a great part and the entire process is gone through by her.

Cosmetics, ornaments and garments

People in Braj villages are still fond of ornaments and using their own kinds of simple cosmetics. Something is peculiar to their dresses as well. Bakhtavara of Alwar in the course of the *Danlīla* found in RORI (no. 254), Alwar says of some ornaments in the following lines –

Anauṭa nūpara sabda uchārẽ pāina pāila kī jhaṅkarẽ
jaribakane lhẽgā ati sohe sārī pīta surāga mana mohe
subhaga kaṇṭha mẽ dularī sohe
mudāri chalā phula-hatha hāthe
chūrī cāru banda bagarī ke
āgurina mhẽdī adhika suhāī
dahī mathānī sīsa sūhāī

These lines mention some of the ornaments, some cosmetics and some dresses—

Ornaments—*Anavaṭa, nūpara* for the feet;
pāila for the legs;
Dularī for the neck—a chain in double;
mudarī, chalā, hathaphūla for the hands; and
chūrī, bāgarī for the wrist.
cosmetics—*Mẽhandi* on the hands, sometimes on the feet also and fingures.
dress—*Lhẽngā*—a big skirt like dress
sārī—a full dress which may be an alternate to the skirt and the apron.

This was the small description of the *gopī who* had gone out with the pitcher of *yogart* on her head for selling it in the town. And then something about the dressing of man through the description of Krishna who was there to demand his, so called, tax :

moramukuṭa muralī lakuṭa chāru chataka banamāla
karyau pitāpaṭa kaṭi su taṭa naṭavara rūpa bisāla

On the head he had the crown of a peacock feather, on the hand he held a flute. There was also stick with him and the garland made of wild flowers was shining beautifully. Around the waist he had a yellow belt. Thus he had a magnificent personality in the form of a clever acrobat.

Another poet Chaturbhujadasa who shifted from Rajasthan to Govardhana says about this peculiar acrobat in these terms—

sira topī kati kāchanī āga abīra kaṭi hātha
yahi bānaka mo mana baso sadā śrī viṭṭhalanātha

'*topi*' is quite common and there are lots of descriptions for the *topi* of shri Krishna made of several clothes and Sura has given lot of poetic force to its description but the '*kachani*' is peculiar to Braj worn by the cowherd boys and men. *Abira* is a type of powder which makes the body shine like silver. The hand on the waist denoted a very frequent posture of Krishna.

'*Arasi*' has played a great part in the Braj and its poetry. It was used for several purposes :

1. to see your own self;
2. to see your husband or beloved through the reflection;
3. to play the mischief by putting it away from the owner of it; and
4. to add to the decoration of the thumb on which it is worn.

It is made of silver or gold and a looking glass piece is fixed in it. There are some cheaper types also which serve as decoration of the clothes. Sometimes the clothes with which horses, camels, bullocks and cows are covered are fixed with these *arsi*-like things made of some cheap material but always fixed with a round piece of looking glass to make it possible for reflection. Some times the clothes of children are also adorned with these round things and they are very much liked because they add to the charm of the garment. Here I reproduce the lines by Saravagi Likhamichand of Chomu, Rajasthan who in his composition entitled '*Arsi ka Jhagara*' written in Rajasthani mixed *Brajbhasha*—

Gvālina hāri krisanajī jitā
jaba jite jhagaṛe me khoī deī laṅgara ārasī
chatura gūjarī biraja kī nārī rimajhima setī kiyo siṅagara
gala sohe chananasīrahāra mohana maṭakī sisa s ãvara
diye ārasi badana nihāre doũ nẽna suramā sāre
runuka jhunaka nūpura dhuna baja chaparā kī chātī pe sāja
brajabāsi kānā do na jaṛāũ meri ārasi
chandrāvala gujari kahāra gavāī laṅgara ārasī

This is well-known episode in Braj that the *gujari* Chandravali lost her *arasi* and there was great hue and cry, but in fact the *arasi* was stolen by Krishna to cause some fun. It was supposed to be very precious, sometimes it was equal to the price of the entire cost of the cattle—

'*nā māno to meri ārasi dhara rākho lālā*
saba gaũan ko mola'

This was to give an assurance to Krishna for a promised return of the *gopi* who wanted to avoid giving tax to Krishna.

'*Sajhi*' was also an occasion for putting on the ornaments. Look at the following pada—

besara chibuka birāja ho
khuṭila khubhī aru ṭhẽṭī bandi jhumaka sāja ho
kaṇṭha śri timiniyā dularī champakalī hāra hamela
mālā ãgiya bā̃ha bijoṭhī bājubanda bisekha ho
cūrī gajara kaṅkaṇa pahũci sãkara mudarī saṅga
kaṭi lhẽgā sāṛī phupharī sobhita hai bahuraṅga ho
paga nūpura jehara pāyala anavaṭa bichiyā pagayāna
yaha sigāra kara chalī laṛetī saba mili gāvata gāna ho

The lines mention some of the traditional ornaments and the garments that are prevalent in the Braj to this day. It speaks about the habit of the women to put on many ornaments and about the richness of the place.

The man was not dressed or ornamented so well. He had his decorative articles from very poor sources. These line say :

sīsa aṭheva phẽta bāndhe hātha lakuṭiyā kāmara kādhe
tana managhāta aru taniya pahire gunjamāla dārigala
gahare

But this *phenta* is often much too small than worn in the right way. For ornaments he has nothing except a garland of the red seeds gathered from the forest. But in some places there are descriptions where men also putting on ornaments. In the ears he had *gudiya*, in the neck he had *tora*, in the wrists he had *bangles* and round the waist he had a *karadhani* made of silver. Sometimes there were thick anklets. The writer of these lines was blessed with all these ornaments in his childhood but later they were removed and now no child wears these ornaments.

For cosmetics we have descriptions of *ubaṭana*, *kājala*, *mahẽdi*, *suramā*, *manjjana*, *missī*, *bēdi*, *abira*, *sīdūra*, *etc*. *Alakta*—a red liquid.

Krishna of course is profusely ornamented by his mother and he is often mentioned to as wearing earrings of the *crocodile* type called '*makarāṛti kuṇḍala*'. These have been the subject of various epithets by the poets. Some said the god of love has gone inside through the passage of the ears and he has left his flag bearing the shape of a crocodile on the gate by which he entered the body of *gopāla*. Or as another said (Krisanadasa)

kuṇḍala makrākrti dolẽ madhuri kaṇṭha kāka puni bolẽ
yasa aba tīna loka mẽ bhāye jahā̃ krisanadāsa guna gāye

I have noted one thing personally that the Braj women are rather strong and they can wear heavy ornaments and in good quantity. Often they are heard singing folk songs giving description and names of ornaments and the fondness with which they look for presents of ornament. The details of these things point out to the fact the Braj culture had attained some efficiency in this art also and that men and women were careful about their dresses and decorations. I place them under semiotics for they indicate something of the culture which can be derived by observation of these articles and in the descriptions that are given by the poets while they describe these people and their activities. More often silver was used for the ornaments but for articles worn in the nose and head, gold was in use.

Articles and types of food

Braj is supposed to be orthodox in its food habits. We cannot think of non-vegetarian food in the area because even the use of onion and garlic is prohibited to the vaishnavas of the area. People as a practice do not use these and they try to keep away from them. Of course under these conditions we cannot think of any alcholic drinks which are strictly forbidden. Among the Braj people the wide use of milk is found. This was due to the fact that the number of cows in the area were more and cow-keeping was an important profession. Krishna was the son of an influential *gopa* and so was Radha, the daughter of a more important *gopa*. But there is no doubt that people were expert in cookery and several kinds of food could be prepared. We talk about *chappana bhoga chatisau vyanjana* and there are occasions when so many articles are prepared and offered to the Lord. There seems to be three meals—*Kaleu* or breakfast, *chaka* or the midday meal had at the place of work either in the fields or on the pastures and *biyaru*—the evening meal. Mostly the midday meal is taken out and the other two inside the house. It differed from house to house according to the financial position of the person. For example the evening meal of Krishna is thus described—

'mohanalāla biyārū kije
binjjana miṭhe khāṭe khāre ruchi sõ mā̃gi janani pe lije
khovā misrī aura basonḍhi tā ūpara tātau paya pīje
sakhāna sahita bali jevata ruchi sõ jūṭhana āsakarana ko
dije'

In a similar strain the same Asakarana says on a different place—

Nipani dūdha lāi jasodā maiyā kīje pāna lalāre
kanaka kaṭora bhari pīje sukha dije brijarāja laṛile

or '*benī baṛhe terī bhaiyā*
āchau mīthau atī autyau he tamẽ madhura miṭhaiyā
āsakarana prabhu dūdha pīje janāni ko sukh dīje prātahī
uṭhata karau gaiyā re

Biri or a beetle leaf duly prepared with its ingredients plays an important part in the food habits of the Braj people. They say that without it a meal is incomplete and is unsatisfied and therefore after meals a *biri* is a necessity. In the temples also *biri* is served to the deity and is very often distributed to selected worshippers. The poet Asajaran describes the offer of the *biri* in the following lines—

'*Kṛishna ko biṛī deta brijanārī*
pāna supārī kathā gulābī lõgana kī na samarī
brijanārī ju kunjja lau ṭhāṛī kanchana kī si bārī
lele biṛī karana kamala mẽ ṭhāṛī karata manuhārī
kahata lāṛile biṛī lije mohana nandakumāra . . . . '

Another poet Chaina describes the spices like this—

'*doṛā lõga kapūra supārī sakala masāle pāna*
chainā bhakta bhakti bara māge prabhu jūṭhaṇi dīje jāna'

It seems quite a few vegetables were prepared in well-to-do houses or it may be that according to the practice of the poets all the articles possible are mentioned at one place any way a knowledge of them was there and we can conclude that the art of preparing vegetables was also good in the Braj area. To my experience the real art of preparing good meals lies in the preparation of the vegetables in several ways. Yashoda the mother of Krishna says—

māta jasoda thāla parose
methī bathvau sarsau sãgara sovāpālaka phoga
kacarī paparī adau sūrana kera karelā joga
ghiyatorāī raṅga besana kī tarakārī bahu bidhi lona
miracha ke saṅga
nibū āma bijaurā kaṭahala kelā karaṇā sēva
nāraṅgī kamarakha kharabūjā nirakhata tribhuvana deva

'khārikha dākha bidāma chirauji saradā tunta ājira
pistā ḍaṛau mevā bahu bidhi lije ḅala ke bira
khājā phiṇi soti suhāni gūjā magada su kina
suri kacauri sirā lucai banī ghrita sau lina
ghebara moiṭūra jalebi khuramā bane rasāla
nukati daṇa aur akabari bhaye indarasā māla
... ...
peṛā barafi māvo misari khaṇḍa sāṭheli sāra
sābūṇi kalākanda damidau sakala aṭhāṇa lāra
phalaka phini dupadi māḍa cāndi poli kina
ghera baṭi moyaṇa roṭi lije syāma pravina
mūga moṭha ki dāla ajaba yaha caṇā uṛada kī ṭhika
sarasa launa tātī sundara chana bani masāle nika
chvāara chokhe chāra bhāti ke lāla pita sukhadāma
mevā adhika bane tā āge ūpara ghi prati bāsa
sikharaṇa sarbata ābi labānī dūdha maṭhā rasa poge
mana mẽ harakhata māta jasoda bāra bāra hari māge.'

These are some of the items which are mentioned as the food served by the mother of Krishna. It includes all kinds of things like leafy vegetables, vegetables for summer and winter, fruits, fried sweets, saltish articles, rice preparations, sweets from milk, various types of bread, all kinds of *dals*, spices, liquids, drinks and so on. The food articles are served over and over again as is the Indian custom, which differs from the European because in Europe if you say the thing is finished but in India it is insisted upon you to eat more and more. It is not impolite but an expression of the love which the server has towards the person served.

Vishnudas in his book *Rukminimangala* mentions the following way of serving meal. Below are mentioned the articles—

'dvija phira bhojana karana lagyau ri'।

The Brahman, then, began to eat. And what are the articles ?

1. *Sevai—'meve dāri sẽvai banāi misri milana kū mahi phira phoṛi;*

2. *Bhata and Dala—Kaṛhi—tāhiri—phulakiā soaked in ghī*;

   'bhāta dāla aru kaṛhī tāhirī phulakiyā garama ghirat mẽ bori;
3. *Uṛadī—pāpaṛa—mūga—magori*—made from *dāls* of *Uṛada, mūga*;
4. *jamikanda, kachanala, chanori—vegetables*;

   "uṛadi pāpaṛa mūga magoṛī jamikanda kachanāla chanorī';
5. There were lots of vegetables—leafy and otherwise—*'bathavā methi soyā bẽgaṇa pālaka ālana dāri karyaurī* (*alana* is a special preparation of the area where the leafy vegetables like *methi, bathuva* and *palaka* are prepared with the help of some gram or *bajara* flour)

   arabi ratālū sema kachālū mūli adarakha ghiya tori;
6. Some saltish fried things were also there like—*baṛe and pakoṛe*;
7. Some fried vegetables like *karelā* and *kakoṛā*;
8. picles from mango and lemon;

   'baṛe pakauṛe karele kakoṛe ambu achara su nību kore;
9. After the meals hands were washed by scented water; and
10. In the end beetle leaf duly prepared (*gilauri*) was offered—

    'le āchamana sugandha parama jala viṣṇudāsa dvija pāya gilaurī'.

This appears to be a complete sort of food served to a guest. Several other descriptions of meals are found specially when the food is served to the deity on some special occasions. The food habits of the people continue to be the same.

Marriage ceremony

Marriage is a big event in the family; like elsewhere great importance is given to its performance. Some of the functions connected with the marriage ceremony are peculiar to the Braj area. I quote here from the devotee poet Rasikasundara in his book entitled *Radhabalavinoda*—

1. *Agauni*—the meeting of the parents of the bride and bridegroom—

agūṇi kū dhyāye nanda aura vriasshabhānu
rorī morī pāne miṭhāī mevā bhoga lagavẽ
aragha padya kara āsana dinhau
bũnde harakh paraspara chirakẽ
haradī dadhi ghrita chirakata dolẽ'.

State Museum Library Lucknow

This ceremony is performed at the time of the marriage and is supposed to be the first meeting on the occasion. '*Morī*' is the coloured thread which is called *Kalaya* in Braj but *morī* or *moli* in Jaipur area. The poet Rasikasundara hails from Jaipur and his works are to be found in the RORI office of Jaipur.

2. Mention was made elsewhere of the peculiar Braj custom of tying and untying the '*patala*' with all the food articles. A poet from Dig, Rajasthan, called Ramakavi or Dvijaram writes in his composition now deposited in the Kashi Nagari Pracharini Sabha, Varanasi (no. 235/36) says, that—

chandramukhī abala tabe hilamila ke sukha sādhi
ātura sau jitane tabe pātara daī su bādhi

When the *patala* was tied with all the articles, one dandy got up—

tākau suni kẽ chela ika ṭhāṛau bhayau pravīna
pātara choṛata bihãsi kẽ paṛhakẽ chanda navīna

And the *patala* was untied in the following fashion—

The method was untying the food articles and tying the ornaments and the parts of the body of the women who tied the *patala*

Untying : *chuṭe gola laddū page khāṛa khurmā*

Tying : *bandhe bhāla bẽdi lhase nẽna surmā*

Untying : *chuṭi au kacaurī baṛe sonṭha sevam*

Tying : *bãdhe janga bājū ubhe pāyajebam*

And in this way — *Ita pātara pūraṇa bhai kahī rāma sukhakanda*
ādi anta mẽ doharā bīcha bhujaṅgi chanda

ita pātara chūṭī abe saba sū kahau sunāya
dhari prasada śri vishṇu kẽ puni jẽvo harṣāya

The manuscript has long descriptions of the ceremony and describes the practice as observed in Braj. There is another book also housed (no. 782/38) in the above library in Varanasi called '*Sakhochchāra*' which tells

chūte janawāse ke sagare
chūte sāhana bāhana hāthī chute bhūpa bhūpana ke sāthī
chūte bāga bagichā sabare chūte janavāse ke sagare
chūtī jhārī karavā charava chute seva runautī laṛavā

This is under the term '*Sakhochchara*' a ceremony of the Braj Brahmanas in which they relate the names and performances of the members of their families from past times.

I shall mention one more event of the Braj marriage and this is :

3. *Garigana—Gāli* means a word of abuse but at the time of the Braj marriage this is to be seen when the women at the house of the bride sing abuses to the members of the marriage party specially the relatives of the bridegroom. They establish intimate sex relations of the men of the bride's party to the women of the groom's party. They would for example say—

jasuda thārī maiyā kahiye jovana mẽ madamātī
laī pakara brishbhāna bhūpa nẽ paṭaka laī ṛaṅgarātī
Aura tumhārī bhūā lālā rasiyana saṅga ḍole
jo koi deya rasīle nenā̃ tinkū ā̃carā khole
bahana tumhāri raṅga mẽ rātī āyī geha hamāre
dekhe idhara udhara raṅgabhīnī ā̃khana dorā̃ dare

and in this way they would go on relating all the family ladies of the bridegroom and causing merriment to the marriage party. They would plead in the end that they need not be taken adversely because they are the sisters of the bride—*sārī*, as they are called

'*ina gārina kau burau na mānau hama nāte mẽ sari*

In this way the women of the brides place have a nice time in calling all sorts of names to the women of the family of the bridegroom. The only occasion which the women of the grooms family have to return these abuses is at the time when the brothers and nephews of the bride go to the house of the bridegroom to fetch the bride after her staying some days in the house of the parent-in-laws. But it lacks that mirth which one experiences at the house of the bride because it is done on a smaller scale and the persons coming are rather youngsters and have not much to add to the joyous atmosphere.

At the time of the marriage the bridegroom is dressed in the traditional dress of Krishna with the same sort of skirt and crest but the bride is dressed in white or red, and both are supposed to keep fast on the day of the marriage. Great religious importance is attached to this ceremony for they say it is as sacred as the joining of Radha with Krishna and is to last not only in this life but also would continue and has been continuing for several lives. The ceremony gives vent to the feelings of the people and we can know a lot from the performance in which both the parties gathered take part at the house of the bride. Of course the main part of the marriage consists in citing the marriage *mantras* but a lot social custom and practices of the folk can be observed if one is keen.

Festivals

Braj is the area of festivals which are mostly religious though some are social. In the collection of songs written by the poet Asakaran of Rajasthan we have *varshotsava* dealing with the festivals and celebrations of the whole year. Here some festivals other than *holi* are discussed for *holi* is so very important that a separate heading seems necessary, which I take up immediately after the festivals in general. I take one group of festivals in connection with *Diwali* which begins with

1. *Dhanaterasa* :

Jasudā madanagopāla bulāve
dhanaterasa āvo nita pyāre le uchanga dularāve
hari jari bāgā bahu bhūshana ruchi sõ bahuta dharāve
brijapati ki mukha sobhā nirakhata roma roma
harakhāve

This festival is in connection with the *diwali* and two days before it the families take care that they have some new items in the house and so here calls Krishna and decorates him with new garments and ornaments. On this occasion one can see in the Braj area the shops crowded with people, specially the shops of the cloth merchant, and dealers in domestic wares.

2. *Rupachaudasa* : Next day falls this festival and it is important for the married women to have all sorts of decorative articles and best clothes to make their impression on their husbands. It is said to add the charm of the women. This is also called *chotidiwali*.

3. *Diwali* : the festival of lights is a great event in the Hindu families, perhaps all over the north of India.

4. Next day comes the *Govardhana pūja* which bears special significance to Braj. Govardhana, now, is a hill in the area and is very very holy so much so that people do several sorts of roundings of the hill spread over some twenty kms—by way of rounding it on foot without shoes, by prostrating all the distance one or several times sometimes so many as 108 times, by rounding with the flow of milk all the way through. The story goes that Krishna started this festival when he insisted that in place of Indra who was worshipped earlier, Govardhan should be offered that worship and there was then the wrath of the god Indra who caused heavy rains and Krishna protected the area by holding the hill on his small fingure. This festival has been so very important to the area that people make the hill of cowdung, etc., and if they cannot go to Govardhana they take a round of this cowdung Goverdhan inside their own houses. This is how the festival started :

gokula ko gokula devatā pyāro giradharalāla
kamala nẽna ghana sāvarau bapu aru bāha bisāla
bega karo mere kahe bahu pakavāna rasāla
bali maghavā bali leta he kari kari kṛita gāla
inke dīne barḥi he gaiyā bacha bāla
saṅga mili bhojana karata hẽ jaise pasupāla
giri govardhana saiiye jīvanagopāla
suradāsa ḍarapata rahe jāte jama kāla

Thus in place of Maghava or Indra the worship of Govardhana commenced. Several poets have sung about the *giri* Govardhana and there is now a big festival in the town.

5. It is followed by *Bhaiyadoja*—the festival of sisters and brothers. The brothers visit their sisters and she feeds her brothers heartily and puts red mark on the forehead of the brother who in return makes some monetary present to the sisters. Asakaran refers to the festival thus taking Krishna and his sister Subhadra as the brother and sister—

āja dyoja bhaiyā kī kahiyata bhara liye kanchana thāla kē
tilaka karahu tuma bahina sahodrā bali aru sri Gopāla kē
ārati karati deta nyauchāvara bārati muktāmāla kē
āsakarana prabhu mohana nāgara prema punja brijabāla kē

Another poet Ramadas says in this connection—

dveja divārī kō bala mohana bahina subhadrā kē āya
bibidha sīgāra pahari paṭa bhūṣana laṭakana calata suhāye
ati prasanna atise ānandita bhaye bhojana mana bhāye
kari sīgara tilaka achita de bīra devata ati sukha pāye
sriphala bibidha miṭhāī meva doū bhaiyana kī goda bharāye
ramadāsa prabhu tuma cira jivo de asisa harakhāye

The festival is described systematically as below :

1. Occasion—the *doja* following the *diwali* festival,
2. Brothers going to the sister,
   brothers—*Bala* (Balarama) and *Mohana* (Krishna)
   sister—*Subhadra,*
3. Dress—being decorated with all kinds of good clothes and ornaments walking in an attractive way,
4. The brothers are first served with choicest articles of food,
5. They were greatly satisfied and felt happy,
6. The sister was also very nicely dressed and decorated,
7. After the meals she put the *tilaka* on the foreheads, of the brothers and over the *tilaka* which is generally of red power some rice pieces were also put,

8. Then *bira* was given,
9. Also were given a coconut, dry fruits, sweets to both the brothers and with these their *laps* were filled,
10. Blessings were given that they may live forever, and
11. The last item of the brothers giving presents to the sister is, however, not given.

Many other festivals are mentioned.

6. *Savanatija* :

jhūlata sā̃vana tījahi pyārī
barasāne brakhbhāna gopa kẽ taruni bhīra ati bhārī
sundara surāga hīḍore jhulẽ kītatikūvari dulārī
ptītama sakhī jhulāvata rasabhara sura kokila anusārī
barana barana tana basana birājata manahu mẽna phulavārī
banita banitana mẽ chabi nirakhata lalita nikunja bihārī

These lines describe the swinging of Radha at the house of her parents. But the two on certain occasions had the swinging together as well—

hīḍoranā ho jhulavẽ sundara nārī
hinḍoranā ho parama chatura banavārī

7. The day on which Shri Vallabhacharya was born—

pragaṭa bhaye śrī ballabha āja
madhomāsa krishna ekādasi maṅgala lagana mahurata rāja

or On the occasion of the birth of Vitthalanathaji

śri ballabha gṛha āja badhāī
jaya jaya sabda hoya tihū pura mẽ ghara ghara anadamāī
maṅgala kalasa calī le bhāmini motina māga purāī
harita dūba achita dadhi kumakuma jahā tahā le dhāī
sura nara jana suni kautika bhūle śukamuni kirati gāi
kesodāsa giradharana śri biṭṭhala gokula pragaṭe āī

8. *Ramanaumi* :

'*āja ayodhyā maṅgalachāra*

dasaratha kõsilya kẽ beṭhe maṅdira ruchi kari pyāra
Raghupati Lachamana Bharata Satroghana pragaṭe dhīra
udāra

9. *Phuladola* :

kūvara beṭhe pyārī saṅga aṅga aṅga bhare raṅga
bali bali bali tribhanga juvatina sukhadāi
nava nikunja madhupa gunja kokilā kala kūjata
punja sītala sugandha manda bahata pavana sukhadāi

ate Museum Librar

Other festivals mentioned are :

Akshaya tritiya, *Nrsimha jayanti*, *Rathayātra*, *Janmāshtami*, *Radhāshtami*, *Vamana dvadasi*, *Dashehara*, *Gopāshtami*, and many many more which continue all through the year.

Holi

Holi deserves a special mention for Braj is known for its *holi* all over the country. The Maharaja of Jaipur under his pen name Brajanidhi write

Hori ke khelan kõ ika gorī guvyandajī ki abhilākha kryau
karẽ
lāla gulāla bhare dhari thārin kesara raṅga ke māṭa bhryau
karẽ
neha lagyau brija ki nidhi sõ nita laṅgara sāsa ki trāsa
dryau karẽ
nandakumāra ke dekhana kõ voha nola badhu chakari lõ
phiryau karẽ

This describes the immense wish of a new bride to see Govinda and play *holi* with him. She is always ready for the fun. Elsewhere the same poet says in '*Phagagrantha*' composed in the year 1848 V.E.

yaha kahi pyārī ke baṛhyau phāga khela kau cāva
chandana chobā aragajā lāla gulāba bulāva
phāga māsa sabatẽ sarasa ati hi sukha ko sāra
gyāre māsana hota nāhi mānana hiya ati hāra

When there arose a keen desire to play all the attributes of the play were gathered together and the occasion was awaited with great gusto. The eleven months may go in a different mood but this twelfth month of *holi* is bound to drive away all anger of the damsel.

The presence of the beloved is very essential during this month otherwise inspite of the glamorous nature the woman does not realise the presence of the season of spring—

phūlī vana ballī au gulāba ki sugandhs pheli
phelau he parāga bana upabana mãhī he
kokilā kī kūka sunẽ hiye mãhi hūka uṭhe
gunjarata aura kunja nãhi mana bhāí he
prītama bidesa sudha aja hũ laī he nãhi
jahã brijanidhi prāna hita tahã hi he
āyo ritu-kanta tahũ kanta nahi āyo yāte
vaḥi deśa mãhi ri basanta ritu nãhī he

The *holi* of Barasana and Nandagaon has been a matter of very great tradition. Here a *pundita* of Nandagaon reaches Barasana and he is given a taste of the festivals—

Nandagāon kau pāḍe brija barasāne āyau
mana bhãvana bhaī bhīra phāga kau khela machāyau
horī kau huravarau pūre puṇyana pāyau
sīsī sarasa phulela saba aṅgana jhalakāyau
hanūmāna ki pratimã mānau tela charḥāyau
kājara sõ mukha mānjyau bandana bīndu banāyau
kora kalasahī sravata manau caparã chapakāyau
gajagamini gauchani saũ tukamaī lapaṭāyau
deha dhare mānau phāguna khelana brija mẽ āyau

These are the lines by Janahari a poet from Rajasthan and these relate to the poor brahamana who went to Barasana and how he was made fun of in all possible ways so much so that he appeared to be the personification of the festival itself. Sad was his lot in reality.

The festival is played mostly between the wife and her husband with the play on musical instruments and singing of amorous songs—

mili khelẽ phāguna mẽ vallabha-bala
saṅga khare rasa raṅga bhare navaraṅga tribhaṅgī lālā
bājata tala mṛidaṅga upaṅga pakhavaja āvaja tālā
gāvata gāri dede tārī manohara gita rasālā

Great joy is taken in doing mischief with Krishna who himself shows a keen desire to get involved in the play. Damodora a poet refers to the incident and introduces a term '*phagava*' which is a present consisting of several items such as sweets, clothes, colours, beetle leaf, given by the male to the female—

bala mohana kau pakari sabe mili anjana dinau nēna
kāhū sakhī pitaṁbara līnau rādhājū linau he bēna
jaba phaguvā tuma dehugai mohana pītaṁbara dẽhũgi āi
damodara prabhu phagavā dinhau ãnȧda ura na samāī

The system of giving *phagava* continues as a practice in the area at present even and on the evening of the day people are seen taking the presents to the women with whom *holi* was played.

It was not inside the doors but it was played and is played outside also in the streets. All the people in India know that on the holi day the morning is not safe because *holi* is played at large in the streets. Here the poet Ramadasa writes about Krishna playing the *holi* in the lanes—

holi khelata kunjabihārī
saṅga liye sukuwārī
kesari kuṅkuma bharī kamorī piya pyārī para dari
chobā chandana agara kumakumā bhar liye brijanari
taki taki chirakata mohana kau kilakata deta kara-tārī
Giradharalāla diyau tina sarvasa rāmadāsa balihārī

In basta no. 8/3 in the Mathuresa temple in Kota I got the works of one Lahirama who thus writes about the festival. He brings in one special item connected with *holi* and it is '*gulari*' a small round piece made of cowdung and with a hole in it so that it can be put through a thread to make a garland with which *holi* (the sacred heap of bushes, wood, thorns, fuel, etc. to be burnt at an appointed time) is worshipped and which can also be put in the neck of a person to make fun of him—

hori nandalāla sõ hõ to kheloīkhelõ
gārī dede bharau bharatayau jaga apaloka sakelõ
nāco uchari bajāõ gāõ patibrata pāhana pelõ

In a similar strain Pancholi Nandarama in his prose book '*Kisanaji Radhaji ki Biraja Bihara Līla*' says—

Eka same sri pūranamāsiji nẽ upajani kõ bāsa choṛa kẽ bidrābana mẽ bāsa kiyau he. ne eka potāu sāthe lāi āī he. tākau nāma madhumaṅgala he (the same one known as *manasukhā*, the playmate and yes the to Krishna) *ta ūpara nandaji jasodāji piyāra bohuta korẽ. ne madhumaṅgala upara rajī rahẽ. ne beṭarā ṭavarā ju janẽ. tāi same basanta ritu āī he. beṣanava rasika bindābana kī sobhā dekhave.. kū ā vẽe. ara basanta khelata hẽ. Ne dapha tāla mṛdaṅga bajāvata hẽ. aru ūce svara sū gāvata hẽ*'.

In *Syamabattisi* (no. 3587) in the Manuscripts Library at Kota the '*phaguva*' is referred to in this way—'*vahe māgata hẽ hari pe phagavā*' and when this demand is met things are as below :

rūpa raṅga kī charḥī chaṭā rijhavai Nandakumāra
phaguvā le manabhāvatau kautuka kare apāra
duhū ora horī machī pichakārina kī dhāra
tiya gulāla sõ lāla kõ mukha māḍyau kari pyāra
yaha āyau riturāja sabe kāja mana kai sare
dapha muralī dhuna gāja brijanarina kai mana hare

Plenty of books were written in the town of Jaipur by Brijanidhi, Maharaja of Jaipur and his court poets. The *Phagagrantha* of good size was composed by the chief himself in his kingdom town Jaipur, called Jayanagara in the year 1848 V.E.

paṛhe kaṛhe pātaka sakala baṛhe ju prema umaṅga
graṅtha kiyau jayanagara mẽ phāga raṅga rasa raṅga
saṁvata aṣṭādaśa śataka aṛatālīsa budhavāra
phāguna sita kī saptamī bhayau grantha avatāra

Plenty of space can be used for telling about this festival and the other festivals but I tried only to give some idea of the type of festivals that are observed in the Braj. This brings us to an end of the points which I wanted to bring out to denote what type of society was composed of and how they lead their life of mirth and satisfaction to their pleasure and others as well. The life is simple, the place of their parents is high, the artistic sense is present, the Braj couple is very shy, the festivals have become part of their life, the dead are also not forgotten, death and birth anniversaries are celebrated, more emphasis is given to the date of expiry of the parents than the birth days in the family, due attention is paid to dress and use of cosmetics, food is an elaborate affair, and marriage is still a great factor of the family.

Society was dealt with the intention of bringing out the main features and now to the civic life.

CIVIC LIFE

The city life as found in Mathura

While carrying on my investigations I came across a book '*Mathura Varnana*' in the possession of a *pujari* of Dig, Bharatpur district. To me it appeared to give a good description of the town and the town life and I propose to give some details from it. A very important feature of the Mathura residents was their afternoon life, spent in a sort of small garden, called *bagichi*. The place used to have and there are some such places even now, the temple of Hanuman, supposed to impart bravery and prowess. It also had plants of different flowers such as *genda*, *guladau*, *gulamehandi*, *gullala*, *gulaturra*, *gulaba* (these are the ones beginning with a 'g'). There was plenty of greenary and the place was sprinkled with water to make it fresh and cool. And there the liquid *thandai* was prepared. It needed the following articles and the stages of preparation are:

1. *Sila and loṛhi*—two stones one large and flat on which the stuff was to be crushed and later rubbed and the

other also of stone needed for crushing and rubbing on the bigger flat stone

2. *Kūṇḍī soṭa*—two other items which indicate a hollow pot made of stone in which the ingradients of the *thandai* were put in water to make it soft, and the other a long stone piece to stir the things

3. *Loṭā*—this pot made of brass was used to moist the *bhanga*, an intoxocating grass put inside the other articles rubbed for *thandai*. This item has its own history and importance and some say that it is a type of the shrub from which the *somarasa* was prepared or the herb of which lord Shiva is very fond of and often drinks it

4. the stage of making the *bhanga* fully wet in the brass pot

5. to stir it profusely with the *soṭa* in the *kūṇḍī*

6. rubbing hard and continuously on the bigger flat stone with the help of another stone and pound it very smooth

7. Other ingradients—pepper, almond, *pista*

8. mixing up the whole thing carefully and making a ball of the entire stuff. The intoxicating drug was also mixed. If some people wanted to take the liquid without it, it was possible but they called that liquid '*widow thandai*' and insisted to have it with the intoxicant.

9. It was then mixed with water but the whole thing was so done that only the liquid was out of the cloth through which the whole thing passed and the other matter was again rubbed and made to pass through again and afterwards thrown away. When the liquid was ready it was turned over again so that the thing was well mixed and then

10. the stage of *rangalagana* which consisted of calling the deities like Krishna or Shiva or Hanuman in the words—

raṅga ragīlai Brija ke rājā bhãga piye to yãhī ājā
jai śivaśaṅkara kāṭā lage na kaṅkara, pīnaipāne kā dhãga
kara

11. Then the actual drinking but it was usually taken through the fold of the palm and it was tried that not a drop came out of the folded palm and they drank fully.

12. It was followed by various comments—some said it had less pepper, some said that it was not very pungent, others said that the spices were very prominent etc.

This liquid is sometimes made with oranges or with cream and milk, and some other stuff are also mixed but the usual *thandai* is with the spices and without its being sweet.

It was followed by people going for toilet in the jungle with the sacred thread hung on the ear. There are various other activities in the place such as :

1. Going for the toilet with the brass pot in the hand,
2. to wash the hands several times with mud when some one takes out water from the well with the help of the rope,
3. besmearing the body with the dust from the place where they are to wrestle or do other exercises,
4. *danda and baithaka*—bodily exercises are to be seen and some are seen having practice for exercise or actually having a bout, and
5. clubs are also turned and moved, the big iron ball is also used by some persons, some use the spear, some learn the art of wrestling, some message the body of the wrestlers, some go with the head downwards, some praise the teachers teaching the art of wrestling or that of doing exercises for the legs or the whole body.

This was a curious phenomenon of having a *bagichi* and thus spending the afternoon in a healthy atmosphere. Of course it needed time and now the time factor has become very prominent the practice seems to be on its last legs, some of these places have already vanished.

In this book apart from the vivid description of a *bagichi* there are many other things described. It tells that around the town there were gardens and orchards and a lot of birds could be seen there. In the ponds nearby there were several kinds of fishes. The women had to fetch water from a well outside, sometimes outside the town, on their heads. In the water that was flowing and in the river Yamuna there were to be seen boats carrying goods and passengers. There are descriptions of musical instruments that were played or displayed in several apartments. The author takes us inside the court and *durbar* of the ruler and points out the pomp and show of the palaces.

There are various types of encampments in different connections and all kind of vehicles wait for the people connected with the courts of the ruler. The ruler had a good system of administration and all the duties were assigned to capable persons in the service of the state.

The author then goes towards the markets and tells us how full they are with all kinds of wares. Dresses are described in detail which give a clue to the type of dresses worn by persons of different status and professions. Ornaments point out the richness of the place and habits of the people. There were pieces of cloth of several specifications and the market was filled with them. All kinds of pots made from different metals were there and the shopkeepers were having a brisk time. Perfumers were also there making the place full of sweet fragrance and telling about the taste of the population. All sorts of trades and business were pursued by people and they were engaged in different professions. Side by side the author gives a list of the names by which men and women of the town were addressed. He is greatly facinated by the '*chauba*' a clan known for several things in the town of Mathura. They are said to be the sons of the river Yamuna and noted for their heavy meals of sweets and drinking of the *bhanga* liquid described above. They exist now for guiding the pilgrims and helping them in visiting religious places and staying there. Mostly they are seen to be a carefree nature and can be recognised by the type of *Brajbhasha* and slangs used by them. The town is also described in details thus :

This is in connection with the arrival of Balarama and Krishna when they approached the town of Mathura in company of their uncle Akrura, who was asked by the ruler of Mathura (the province of Saurasena), Kansa to fetch the two brothers from Nandagaon where they lived with their parents and noted for their valour and pranks. It seems from the book that there are some exaggeration and the book should not be taken at its face value. We have to make allowance for poetic imagination and accept the things at a discount value but the fact remains that the general pattern of city life is very much evident from the descriptions and we can reconstruct what life was like in a Braj town. Of course we do not find another town of this type in the area and the remaining places can come in the category of village alone. It is better to reproduce some extracts from the book to justify the conclusions and give a taste of the expression and language used by this author of a different type.

Names of women

Names of persons are peculiar to the area. In Braj men and women have some names of which some have a universal character but many show local colour. Here are some names of women—mostly are from the book *Chappana bhoga tātparya* (Kota library of the RORI no. 3421) written in the 19th century :

Amalā, Avadhā, Abalā, Asilā,
Kumudā, Krishṇā, Karuṇa, Kunjā, Kusumārī, Kumārasikā, Kamalā, Kāmāvali,
Gyānā,
Chandrabhāgā, Chaturā, Chaṁpā, Chandrāvalī,
Jahilā, Jamunā,
Tārā,
Durbadhyānā,
Dhāmā, Dhyānā, Duragā,
Nandā, Navalā, Nainā, Nīlā,
Premā, Pramadā, Pyārī, Premāvali,
Brajamangalā, Bahūla, Bihārī,
Mohā, Mukatā, Muktapurā, Maṇgalā, Mēnā,
Ratanī, Rambhā, Rūpā, Raṇgahāsā, Ratanā, Rādhā, Rāmā, Rasikā, Rāmāvali,
Lalitā, Lalanā,
Vimalā, Vrindā,
Sabalā, Sīlā, Sumati, Syāmā, Sukumā, Sukhmā, Sumanā,
Harakhā, Hīrā.

Colours

I found a book in the KNP Sabha Varanasi named *Rangamanjari* written by one Mohanalala of Kumher (Dist. Bharatpur) in which are given names of the colours used in the Braj area for dyeing clothes, coplexion of persons, enamaling the ornaments, etc. The book has the colophon—

Thārese sētisa kā gaṛha kumhera subha thāna
Keśava suta mohana rachi Raṅgamanjari nāma

The colours mentioned are—

Tusi *Amauvā, Asamānī, Udau, Kocha, Kāsani, Kiramichī,*
Narangi *Kesariyā, Kasūmala, Khasakhāsi, Gulābī, Jumardī,*
Jumarī, Jāmanī Jaṅgālī, Tūli, Pistī, Pācharangī,
Pyājī, Basantī, Badāmī Mūgiyā, Māsi, Lāla, Līla,
Lahariyā, Sosanī, Sipatālū, Seta, Sindūrau, Haryau,
Havāsi.

And he has given their verifications in a novel way—

1. *Seta* :

Seta basana tana mana saje sakhī sakhā gopāla
sarada rēne rasarāsi rachi manau nachata marāla

(the white colour is appropriate to the full moon light and it was on such nights that Lord Krishna excels in his *Mahārāsa* or *Rāsa* in the company of his playmates consisting of *gopas* and *gopis*)

2. *Kiramichi : Pyaji* :

Paṭa kiramachi pe naye nūpura pāyala pāya
daṁpati subha parjaṅka pe pyājī saija bichāya

(*Kiramicha* resembles the grey colour which the couple had and the bed was spread over with the sheet of onion colour)

3. *Badami* :

Beṭha bhauna kai kauna mē voṛhi badāmī sāla
sonajuhī sī jagamagata kanakalatā sī bāla

(the damsel is covering her body with an almond colour shawl and appears like a creeper of the *sonajuhi*)

4. *Sipatalu* :

bani bāla ṭhārī aṭā ghaṭā rahi gaharāi
guṛī uṛavata kara gahe sipatālū raṅga lāi

(the heroine is flying a kite on a clouded day standing on the roof of the house; the colour of the kite is *sipatalu*)

5. *Sosani* :

Sāri sohe sosani bani bāla subha raṅga
jhūlata raṅga hiḍoranā manyau charhyau anaṅga

(It is a deep blue *sari* which the young woman wears and is swinging in the *jhūla*. She appears as if cupid himself is doing so).

6. *Udau* :

The colour *Udau* is a bluish colour and the apron of such a colour is on the body of the damsel. She is going to Krishna and appears to be a shaft of the fire beautifying in the thin sky).

7. *Mungiya* : (light green)

Bani bāla ati chāva sõ basana mũgiyā dhāra
kuṅkuma kardama tana lagī nagana sī subha nāri

(the dress is light green, the colour of the pluse called mũga and with the anointment of the cosmetics she appear so supple as the serpent of the colour--it tells about the thinness, supple movements and the special complexion under that garment)

8. *Kasani* :

Kṛishṇa kāsanī kari sukhada gāvata lele nāma
kaili stri sabahī sahita vrindābana nija dhāma

(*Kasani* is a bit blackish and in that dress there goes the non-stop sport of Krishna with the playmates in the permanent residence of Krishna—Vrindaban).

Some colours are repeated in several different contexts as well.

Vehicles

Mention is made of *chaturangini* force *i.e.*, the elephant, horse chariot and foot soldiers. All these are mentioned in the book *Karuna-bharana* by Krishnajiwan Lachhiram in the following verse—

Hāthī ghoṛā ratha ra payāde
khichara ūṭa sahata dāmāde
barana barana asvārī solī
chahoḍola aru pālakī ḍolī

Besides the four types there were many sorts of vehicles including the camel, *khichchara*, etc., and some sophisticated vehicles like *chahodola*, palanquin and the *doli* used for tender people.

Informational

Goswami Madhavaraiji Maharaja in his book *Braj ki sanskritika parampara* gives information about :

1. *Historical places found inside the Braj area* : For example Mathura and Vrindaban. They have been mentioned in historical treatise in connection with the several dynasties that ruled the Shaurasena province with Mathura as the capital which played an important part in religion, the Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism. Vrindaban is also recorded in the Moghul records as the place for magnificent temples and the revival through the Gaudiya saints as also its intimate relation with the religious traditions and linguistic affinity with Bengal.

2. *Geographical aspects* : Braj occupies an important area in the heart of India and is easily approached from several parts of the country. The river Yamuna flows through it and is made sacred through its waters giving such a holy place to this river in the annals of Braj.

3. *Ashtachapa* : This occupies an important place in the development and history of Hindi literature. These poets were born, initiated and performed their poetic wonders in this area. They added so much to the riches of Hindi literature and spread of the Krishna sect and influenced the life of the people.

4. *Development of art* : Braj was not neglecting this aspect also and it can be seen through the *Rāsalīla* which include dancing, music and elegant dressing; *sanjhi* was there to give expression to the feelings by way of grand drawings on the ground by means of powder colours, the art of living, way of dressing, performance of worship all play their part in the development of art.

5. *Literature* : Veres produced in this area included not only in *Brajbhasha* by the poets of *ashtachap* but many others but the learned scholars made their contributions in Sanskrit and Bengali languages as well having Krishna as the topic for their works. A lot of this literature has now been published and the poetic genius exhausted in these works is admirable. Side by side good commentaries on standard works like *Srimadbhagavatam* were also produced and the area abounded in literary activity. The tradition of producing devotional literature has not been lost and even in the present days there are devotees and *pundits* who are making their contributions in the several fields of literature mostly in the field of devotion to the deity of the place, Lord Krishna.

6. *Institutions*. Several religious and literary institutions have sprung up in the area. They are busy in several ways giving some solace to the people. We can mention the names of some of the institutions in the area, such as Hare Krishna Movement for the purpose of giving peace and tranquility in the material world which has caused sufferings to the west, the Oriental Institute of Philosophy for giving opportunity to understand and work on Indian Philosophy, the Vrindaban Research Institute and the Braj Shodha Samstahan for the preservation of the literary heritage of the area, the Harinama Sankirtan Mandala for singing the praises of the Lord and for getting on with several cultural activities, and many others. In fact the temples and the *ashramas* are atleast, some of them good institutions busy in their own ways for the good of the society and the spread of the cult. Much literature is also produced by these institutions.

7. *Old places* : Much of the history of the places, the religious observances, literary productions, lives and activities of the saints, several mythological details with their symbolic value are glanced the rage of the ancient places which are in plenty in this area. Surely we are not to be led by the traditional stories but these places can provide material for scientific researches and many truths can be brought out by scholars. Braj has many such places some of them prehistoric. It is correct that the places like Vrindaban, Gokul, etc., were discovered later but Mathura has a long story to tell. Some of the scholars including foreign ones like Hertel of Germany

have carried out excavation works at places like Sonkha and gathered valuable information about the culture of the area *viz.*, how people lived, what was their civic life, how the cities flourished, what deities were worshipped and how was the construction work taken up in the populated areas, etc.

8. *Yātra* : It has been pointed out elsewhere that the Yātra of the Braj was important in several ways and it had a good tradition of having personal knowledge of so many facts of life. The institution of *Yātra* is active even now but it is getting more of a fashion than to be a force of intensity for the purpose of real understanding of the many branches of human activity. *Yātra* was also a sort giving opportunity for a community life between Vaishanavas living in different parts of the country. It brought them together for some weeks and many things could be well understood and exchanged.

9. *Rāsalīla* : This is an integral part of the Braj culture and the area is known through this artistic, cultural and religious institutions. Some names have become prominent in this field and they have their programmes in all parts of the country spreading the message of the Krishna cult and giving them a taste of the dances, songs, music, dress, language and living of the people. The *Rāsa* is a combination of many arts and many activities and people who witness them are differently moved, though the main theme running in them is that of devotion. The work of modernisation has commenced in this activity as well and people are doubtful if modernisation will be able to keep up the spirit of the institution of the *Rāsa*. But it goes without saying that the *Rāsalīla* have been instrumental in keeping up many of the Braj cultural aspects and spreading the message of the area and the religion of the place.

10. *Sajhi* : This aspect of artistic expression has been mentioned in several contexts and there are places in Vrindaban and elsewhere and a visit to which is bound to be rewarding. Art is an expression of the feelings within and when we have a look at the various drawings produced in this connection we get glimpses of the life of people and the artistic activity within. The *līlas* of Krishna, the type of houses, the existence of the groves, creepers and the blossoming of the

flowers in the pictures go to bring out the characteristics of the area.

NATURE

Vrindaban

Among the twelve forests and twenty-four sub-forests Vrindaban occupies a place of significance and is known all the world over; of course not as a forest as its names suggests but as the place where Lord Krishna played pranks. But from the point of view of nature itself Vrindaban deserves a mention.

> *vrindābana vaibhava jitau titau kahyan nāhi jāta*
> *dekhata sampata vipina kī kamālahū lalachata*
> *vrindābana kī latā sama koṭi kalapataru nāhi*
> *raja kī tula bekuṇṭha nāhi aura loka ke māhi*

With the plants, trees and creepers the Raja of Braj has been playing a significant part for its from this that some of the paints for the forehead are made and it is also used for rubbing the body with, generally by the saints and to be put on the head and forehead by the pilgrims going there. This Raja has been given a higher place than the earth but of the heaven itself. 'Brajraja' as it is called was so sacred that even Lord Krishna had a taste of it and when the mother got angry and wanted to see what mud Krishna had eaten on getting the mouth opened she had a sight of universe.

Great has been the desire to reside in this forest of Vrindabana

> *khaṇḍa khaṇḍa hve jāya tana aṅga aṅga sata ṭūka*
> *vrindābana nāhi chāṛiye chāṛivo he ati chūka*

and at another place it is said

> *sakahi tau vrindāvipana basi china china āyu vihāta*
> *aisau samẽ na pāihe bhalī banī he bāta*
> *vrindābana ke basa kau jinake nāhi hulāsa*
> *mātā mitra sutādi tiya tajiye tinkau pāsa*
> *basi kẽ vrindā vipina mẽ yaha mana mẽ dhari lehu*
> *kijai eso nema draṛha ya raja mẽ pare deha*

A living in the forest of Vrinda, its continuous residence and fall of this body in the same Vrindaban should be the uppermost of this life which has become a blessing on account of the opportunity offerred to a person.

But so far as nature is concerned Vrindaban is well-known for the special kind of shrubs like the *karila* and special type of trees like the *Kadamba* with its excellently perfumed colour of the flowers is a blessing to the area. The groves which are to be found sometime and the ones which have been coming from the past times bear a special significance to arouse in us pious feelings and kind of love to Nature.

Several places in Vrindaban are known for their scenic beauty and performances by the cowherd boys and their playmates. The *Vamshivata* with all its past glamour and the present sanctity are there to attract the people for natural beauty, so is the chiraghata where the bathing women were deprived of their wearing apparel by the mischievous boy Krishna—a bath in the nature's gift, Yamuna, has ever been considered very nice for the people who visit that area. Nature near about the Braj has been so very inviting that there were many *ashramas* and *kutis* for having a peaceful time and for performing religious practices. Even now the *kutis* of saints continue to exist in beautiful natural surroundings. Most of the time the Braj boys were outside the residence and spent the time in the lap of nature with all kinds of games and sports as also the duty of grazing the cows in the natural pastures. The number of trees in the area was large for many of the sports were on trees.

The trees and creepers

In Braj trees are in abundance and in *Vrindabana Shobha* we have under '*Nikunjavilas*'—

kadali amba kadamba mili bani bana rahe avāsa
tāla tamālina jāla bicha subhaga sarovara nīra
amala kamala praphulita tahā̃ rochaka tribidhi samīra
Kadali, kadamba, tāla, tamāla, kamala which represents the vegetation of Braj

But a good description of the trees in given by Mohan Lal of Kumeer in his book *Phulamanjari* composed in 1845 and obtainable now from the Manuscripts Library of the KNP Sabha where it reached as a gift by Pt. Mayashanker Yajanika who was a high officer in the then State of Bharatpur. The number of flowers that he mentions is numerous. They are :

Kamla, Kevarau Kadam, Kasuma, Kattagi, Kesū
Gēda, Gulābāsa, Gulāba, Gulachīni, Gullālā, Guḍahara, Gulamalaṅga, Guladāū, Guḍahara, Gulturrā,
Chamelī, Chaṁpā,
Dupahariyā
Pāḍara,
Phagulā
Baranā, Baurasirī
Mõgarā, Motiyā, Māniyā, Malatī
Rupamaṇjarī
Sadābasanta, Sevati Saunajuhī, surajamukhī, Sevatī, Sudaraśana.

Some of these flowers are illustrated in a figurative :

Saunajuhi : *Saunajuhī kī bhāti ki pagiyā pahari murāri*
saunajuhī turrā mukuṭa saunajuhī ke hāra

(Murari is having the turban, crest and garlands of *saunajuhi*)

Surajamukhi : *sūrajmukha pe sekarana vari vari ke ḍāri*
mere mohanlāla kī sobha kanu nahī sāra

The face is just like the flower of *Surajamukhi* and on the face hundreds of things can be offerred as a sacrifice; my Mohanalala is so beautiful that not even an iota of it can be compared to all these.

Dupahariya : *bhāla bāla bēdi daī dupahariyā kī bāla*
dupahariyā kī saija saji dupahariyā kī māla

The flower *dupahariya* has been found to be so nice that the mark on the forehead, the spread on the bed and the garlands all are from the same flower.

Varana : *sisa mukuta kati kachani pahire pita dukula*
bana bana ke avata lala kara varana kau phula

All the attributes are there with a crown on the head, a fine loin cloth, and a yellow dress but with all this fine attire he holds a flower of *dupahariya* in his hand to complete his decoration.

Phagula : *le phagulā kara sundari mõ sau kyau ithalāi*
pānī kī hī āgi dhau pānī sõ no sirāī

Phagula is a kind of rose which adorns in the hand of the beautiful woman. How is it possible to put off the fire of water by using water alone.

Gudahara : *aju kahā tarẽ alī pahire navala dukūla*
piya pardesa bidesa yaha janu guḍahara kau phūla

What has happened to you today that when your husband is in a foreign place and you are also in a different place that you are decorating yourself with new clothes? Why do you appear like the *gudahara* flower? It suggests meeting some friend in the absence of the husband.

Chameli : *chāru chamelī kau harā guha pahiryau Ghanaśyāma*
bīcha bīcha guṇjā puhī tilakha ju mohana bāma

Ghansyama made a garland with the jasmine flowers and in the middle there were several bunches of the *gunja*—a red bead. This made the women restless by seeing the so decorated Mohana.

And the author says about himself :

> *panḍu veda basu chanda ye basat kumhera su gāon*
> *kesava suta Mohana racī phūlamaṇjarī nāma*

In the year 1845 V.E. Mohan son of Keshava resident of the village Kumhera composed this book called '*Phūlamaṇjarī*'.

There is of course no dearth of flowers in the Braj and this poet has used the flowers in a good way displaying the quality, colours and odour of the flowers. The poetic fancy has been to use the beautiful things as attributes for human beauties and this points out the developed culture of the area.

The seasons

There are three seasons normally found in the area—the summer, the winter, the rainy. But mention is made of six seasons—the *Basant*, the summer, the rainy, the *sisira*, the *sarada*, the fall. In the literature the seasons are not described as such but only in the '*barahamasa*' descriptions when through the mouth of the separated couples they bring out the main feature of the season. There are many many such compositions, and here I make reference to only two of them from the collections of the RORI, Bikaner—the *Krishna Barahamasa* and the *Krishna Radha Barahamasa*—

abhu sāvaṇa māsa bhala āyau bhavana belaṛiyā chāyau
sāvaṇāyarī ũvā barase mhārau hari bina hivaṛau tarṡe
(Rajasthani).

The good month of *Savana* has come now and creepers are spreading in the house. The clouds of the month are raining but my heart is feeling the pangs of separation in the absence of my lord.

chetrū khūba suhāve kanta
phūḷi bana tana khiṛa basant
nita uṭha karana calaṇe kanta

In the month of *Chetra* you like your beloved very much because the spring season is well blossoming; but the pity is that the beloved each day proposes to depart.

Phāguṇa māsa phaṛuke
mhāraū hara biṇa jīvaṛau phuṛake
kesara bharī mhārī jhorī
me to khelyū kaniyā sū horī

Phaguna is of course throbbing, but I am feeling the separation so very much inside my heart. I have filled my lap with saffron but with whom can I play the game of *holi* ?

Prabhu baisākha māsa bhala āyau
dhara nema saba lāyau,
gorī pīpala pujaṇa jāvatī

The good month of *Baisakh* has come nicely and several vows are being observed including the worship of the *pipal* tree.

In all the months the only question of importance is the meeting with the beloved and for this the crow, the *pundit* and the astrologers are consulted

ā tau puche paḍita joshī mhāre savaṇau milaṇa kaba hosī
tuma uṛare banarā kāgā mhāre sāmara ne ghaṇa dina lāgā

The oracles are consulted and the crows are asked to fly away—all this because the coming of the beloved is very much delayed.

The nature in Braj is bountiful of which is generally attached human feelings. The trees, the flowers, the seasons—all play a part in the human affairs and they are used not as the descriptions of nature as such but to express the feelings of individuals or community to bring out their inner self. There are accounts of the forests which were places of grazing the cows but also the abodes of human activity. This can be seen in many ways. The children when all to themselves and in good numbers will use the opportunity for playing some kind of healthy games involving plenty of physical effort like Climbing the trees or brisk running or the game of the ball which sometimes took them to risky consequences, like the entry of Krishna in the waters of a poisonous pond in which the serpent Kaliya resided. There were others of a devotional nature who would prefer to reside in the bountiful Nature all alone and would involve in all sorts of activity to please the Lord. A saint in the Braj area will not take to penances or deep meditation, he would instead establish a small temple with the idols of Radha Krishna and worship them as his constant companion.

The seasons in Braj are well marked. There is definite summer when the temperature reaches a high point and people use all kinds of heat preventing devices but the practice in Braj has been to employ the time for making Radha and Krishna happy by employing the flowers in making summer houses and spreading the sweet smell from the flowers and aerated and perfumed waters. The winter season on the one hand calls for the cold protection devices but it also takes into consideration the separation of the beloved, who is none else but the lord, Krishna. All seasons are described through the medium of the deity becauee to a *Brajbasi* Krishna is the medium through whom all experiences are to be realised. It will be found that before using any good thing it will first be offerred to the deity. This feeling about the seasons, about the beauty of flowers and the blossoming of trees is a peculiar way and it adds to the culture of the area which may sometimes be called not the culture of the population but the culture of theirs through the mighty power who is supposed to be behind all the activity of mankind. This is, perhaps, best seen in this area.

Vrindaban is the centre for all this realisation for this is the place so very dear and near to the eternal couple and it is through them that the poets have given ventilations to their feelings and an idea of the cultural development which took deep roots in the soil of the area. It seems that the culture of Braj is so to say Krishna culture.

ARTS

The Braj art is seen in the devotional nature of the people. Whether it is painting, playing the instruments, dances or architecture, the centre of activity revolves round the deity of the place. Here I take just some examples in which the art of the place can be seen.

Pichavai : artistic coverings are made by the traditional artists for hanging them behind the deity. There was found a book containing *pichvai ke kavitta* and some use is made of the verses found therein :

rāje Girīdhārilāla sakala sĩgāra saji
taki chavi chāī saba jagata sukhadāī he
bhaktana kī bhẽṭa huti kaiyau ghosana kī
kīni vinayoga prabhu vinaya batāī he
ratana khachita ke banāye bidhi kalpataru
motina kī bela cahũ ora chavi chāī he
Srī Dāmodaraji ke prema kau parama puraśharatha yaha
chokhaṭa kī jora kau banāī pichavāī he

The *pichavai* has been created artistically with a good framework and employing pearls and great effort. These covers behind the back of the idol were done with great care and could well be seen in temples. When they grew old or when a new one was offerred to the deity like the present one given by several cowherd people the old ones were kept away and were often used by the priests but now they are on sale and bring a good price. Dr. Mohankumar Gautam a specialist in the study at the Kern Institute in Leiden speaks about the fancy of some collectors to give fantastic prices for procuring these covers for they speak a lot about the religion and culture of the Braj. This manuscript was found in the Kota branch of the RORI (no. 3538) another copy of which was entered as no. 3225. The book was by a Rajasthani poet Rasikamani in the year 1796 V.E. This was in connection with the arrival of all the forms of the deity in the Vallabha sect where seven forms are said to exist as the poet says—

srījī ke pāsa satau sarūpa padhāre ta bera ke kabitta

The book was written '*saṁvata satrese chayānvā ke kartika mẽ uchava chaudasa divārī ko*'

The *pichvai* described above was an ornamented creation with pearls and other decorative devices but there are mostly of a painted nature and are done by traditional artists in the temples or in their private houses. It has been a practice with some people to offer the curtain that is drawn before the idol or the *pichvai* which is hung on the well behind the idols.

Musical instruments

In the Braj there are many kinds of musical instruments which can be seen during the performance of the *rāsalila*, the chanting of the names of the Lord in the form of *kirtana*, on the occasion when the Lord is being shown to the devotees in a *jhanki* or on times when a song is sung or the persons play in the fairs. In a book obtainable from the library at the Chandanamahala Potikhana, Jaipur we have *Rekhata rasa kau* when we note :

bīnā ravāba chaṅgī muhachaṅga au saraṅgī
sahatāra jalataraṅgi kaṭhatāla tāla saṅgī
Kinnar tamūra bājai kabuṛa ki taraṅgi
ḍholaka pinaku khañjari tabale bajẽ umaṅgī
alagojā au sohanāi bheri aura bajẽ puṅgi
raṇasiṅga aura turahī nĕkalma baji sudhaṅgī
naubata bajẽ madhura sõ rāgarāsa ke hẽ jaṅgī

These are some of the musical instruments used at the time of the *rāsa*. There are stringed instruments, there are many types of drums, many made of the horns of the animals, those made from the bamboo, the *jalataranga* where several cups of different sizes filled with water are played with a wooden stick. But I doubt if they are used at the time of the *rāsa*. The instruments now used are not so many. But sometimes an orchestra can be seen and often persons with many kinds of musical instruments in which they are interested will join together at the time of *kirtan* and use all their instruments in harmony. The peculiar drum of some lenth is played with the ringing bells when the *kirtaniya* sings the *padas* at the time of *darshan* in a Vallabha temple.

Dholaka, *Majira*, *Karatala* and *algoja* are used in local fairs and not only devotional songs but sometimes songs of a popular type are sung with the musical instruments being played with great gusto. In the Braj the musical instruments are used with devotional songs for the purpose of getting greater devotion and engagement in the job for music has the quality of bringing concentration and it is thought that use of these instruments is best done when they take your mind away from the worldly affairs.

Basuri

Basuri of Braj has a great significance for it is the permanent companion of Krishna, sometimes even greater than the physical presence of Radha and it is for this reason that Radha considers the flute as her co-wife and responsible for distracting the attention of her friend Krishna from her. Krishna played many types of flutes. *Basuri* made of bamboo, *murali* made in some elaborate design and the *veṇu* out of the horn of an animal.

Rasikaraya has given the story of the flute (*basuri*) when it was stolen by the *gopis*. It was done for several purposes—to bring Krishna to them for demanding the flute, to tease Krishna to make him angry which the *gopis* seem to enjoy, to divert the attention of Krishna for some time from the flute of which he is so very fond and to enter into playful discussion on the subject of the flute being missed.

bãsurī dījiye brijanāri
kāli sokhi yahi ṭhaura bãsuri bhūli bisāri
aiji tuma jo lẽ gaī dhāma bāta hama suniya tumhāri
tihāre kāma na āvaī bansi hamārī dehu

The argument of Krishna is 'O the ladies of the Braj ! give me back my flute. I am definite that yesterday on this place I forgot my flute and I have heard your talk mentioning that you took it to your place. It is of no use to you, you have, therefore better give it to me.'

There is yet another instance :

kāhai kāu rāri baṛhāvo
aiji samajha būjhi mana mãhi kahai loga hãsāvo
yaha baṅsī nirmola ki tuma deti kyaũ na gãvāri
loga hasẽ carcā karẽ tuma dekho manahi bichāra

Why are you creating a fuss in the form of a struggle ? Well consider to yourself in your mind and do not cause people to laugh at the incident. My flute is priceless. Why do you, idiotic women, not return it to me. People are laughing and attributing different motives, you think well to yourself. But the women of the Braja get angry at this and they remonstrate—

hamasõ kahata gãvāra āpanī karata baṛāī
marū gulachā chāra tora bābā kī jāī
tumasai kitaka gvāliyā mãgata hama para dāna
caturāi tuma chāṛu dehu lālā gāya charāvahu jāī

'You call us uncultured and idiotic and are praising yourself ! Remember I shall give you four slaps with a closed fist on your cheek. I am born of your elders. Many of the cowherd

State Museum Library

boys like you demand their tax from us but I advise you better leave your cleverness and do your job of grazing the cows.'

And as for the fact that we have taken away your flute remember that you are not worthy of trust you might have forgotten it elsewhere. Well you are a blot to your family for you are accusing without reason.

aiji nandaahara kai kumara kanha tohi kauna patije
bhūla āye kahū̃ anta dosa hama kau nāhi dije
le lakuṭi mukha dharau baṅsi vakau nāma
jā ghara tuma sai putra hẽ lālā ujarata tinke nāma

Well, the son of Nanda called Kanha, who will believe you? You have forgotten elsewhere and you are accusing us. You use your stick on the mouth and call it a flute. A house is destroyed where there are sons like you.

Bansi used to be the cause of plenty of frolic and fun and there were long arguments for the resortation of the flute and the forgetful nature of Krishna. Among the *rāsa* also there is the *basurilila* where Radha steals the flute and Krishna reaches her house and after great arguments and plenty of vows the *bansuri* is given back and there is a happy meeting of the two. It seems Krishna was very fond of this musical instrument for even when he was holding the hill of Govardhana on the small fingre, as it is called he did not forget to play on the *venu*—

bāya nakha dhari upaia giravara kara venu bajāve
mahā mauhinī kau mana ta china suni suni jāta churāve

When he was holding the hill he played on the *venu* in such an attractive style that the all attractive Radha was greatly attracted to hear all that.

Sajhi is also an attraction in the art of the Braj but this will be treated elsewhere. The art of displaying the sports of Krishna's calls forth many of the artistic devices and we may turn a little on that artistic performance.

Rāsalila

Rāsa is a combination of several arts, like— the art of dressing, the art of playing, the art of singing, the art of music, the art of mimickery, the art of discussion, the art of public performance, the art of worship in a pleasant style, the art of cosmetics and make up, the art of hairdo and other parts of the body, the art of exhibiting the atmosphere of the time, the art of impersonation, the art of playing different roles, preservation of the traditional arts, the art of painting, the art of stage making and so on. It has been variously described by the Braj poets and a display can be visited personally. It has a deeper significance apart from pure art. The main purpose of the *rāsa* is that feelings of devotion and vibrations are deep rooted in the persons who attend these demonstrations. The tradition of the *rāsa* play is sufficiently old and the purpose was that the *lilas* of the Lord are given expression by public display, easy to understand and appealing to the common person. To this idea several things were added to make the *rāsa* an expression of depicting the Braj culture through its artistic presentation and this continues to this day.

SPORTS

Sports are a part of cultural life of the people and in the Braj and these were played in several ways. There were those which involved a high type of intellectual exercise, those which related to the nature and its glory, the ones which needed lot of physical exertion and others where the physical side was not so very hard. There are mentions where the sports or better the games were played inside the house and sometimes within the walls of the room. Some reference is made to such games and sports of which some are purely of a local nature.

Bhadududu and *akhmichauli* are games of a wide range so much so that the first one is now being tried for as a national game of the country and some try to give it even a higher status.

The Radhavallabh sect has given many good poets of whom I have great appreciation to Ananyaali who seems to be a poet of Rajasthan belonging to the trading community of the area. He was a great devotee and his work consisting of 108 *līlas* deserves a quick publication but so far it lies in manuscript form only. He mentions many games, like *phularachana*, *bhadudu*, *akhmichauli* (*ni*), *hora* and so on. About the first one he says —

bhaḍuḍuḍu khela mahāmatvārau   khelana moda baṛhyau ati bhārau
gori kī saba gori gori   sàvari bhāĩ syām̐a kī ori
kusum parāgana le le bhāĩ   ratipati srī marajāda banāī
līlā bhaḍuḍuḍu khela vilāsaṁ   sri hita ura mẽ karyau prakāsaṁ

but before the sport began they had

lāla pīta pheṭa sira sobhā   manu anurāga chavina kī lobhā
tinapara ratanana pẽcha lapẽṭe   sabake chita vita laita sameṭe

and as for the girls

ati chancahla dīragha kala nẽnā   anjana raikha bani sukha denā
pahũchini me muktana kī mālā   chavi so lapaṭī chavi kī jvālā

The sport is very intoxicating and there are parties. Here the white coplexioned girls were on the side of Radha and those who had a darker colour were on the side of Krishna. They drew a line between the two to divide the area of each party. But before actually taking up the game they had dressed exquisitely and the boys as well as the girls were in their best. The boys had on their heads the turban with decorated portion on them and had a girdle of cloth. So were the girls with large eyes coloured with the black powder and ornaments in their wrists and neck. Both of the parties appeared so very pretty. The line between serves as the line of democration between the two parties beyond which they have to go to the other party with the continuous words' *bhadududu*, *bhadududu*' or '*kabbadi*, *kabaddi*' and the like and if they can touch one of the other party he is dead (becomes ineffective) but if he losses breath or is caught beyond escape the aggressor is dead. Thus it continues till all the members of one party are made ineffective. The sport is so named after the words which the aggressor has to pronounce all the time. The game is also called '*kabaḍḍi*' as we have —

ākhiamichounī kabaḍḍi kūdo phāḍ kyāra

In the line above there is a mention of some more games of which *akhamichauni* is a very popular game and can be played by boys or girls or by the two combined. It is played by a number of persons and one of them is blinded by covering his eyes. The others try to hide and when the blinded person is allowed to go out he has to find some one from his hiding place and this person is then the next one to be blinded and make a search for the others. Thus it continues

mude piche tĕ priya ke nĕnā barajata sakhi ko dede sĕnā
abatau ḍhūdhina kaṛhī pyāre urate karata na china hi nyāre

The eyes are closed from behind by a non-party person and there are eye gestures for the hiding places. When Krishna finds Radha out of the place of her hiding he is not prepared to leave her for long. The play is for children of tender age and they can hide in places very near the place of sport. But Kabaddi is played in field away from the places of abode and sometimes in the forests.

There is also a mention of '*kudo phanda kyara*'. This game is generally played by girls who make a plan with lines and they have to cross the lines by jumping and covering the whole distance on one leg. They have to clear out the whole distance and where there are lines they have not to touch it but cross it by jumping on one foot which is required to be used throughout the whole distance. If the foot above touches the ground or the drawn lines are touched the girl is disqualified and is out of the game. There are several ways of crossing and the one who covers all the types is the winner. *Kūda* is jumping; *phāda* is crossing and the lines drawn are said to make spaces called '*kyāra*'. Thus the entire play has been named as '*kūda phāda kyāra*'

Below I give some more extracts to indicate further games—

jo jo tumhe bhāve gāhī khela kau khilāya lehu
ranchaka hu kapaṭa kalesa karau kāhu tai na
ũcī uṛiyāta gẽda jhapaṭa milāya laihu

Krishna making a statement of games refers to several games and confirms that whatever game he is called upon to join he would observe two things—he would not play false with any one and secondly he would not be angry with any of the players. It seems, therefore, that these two are the attributes of play and it is said also 'all is fair in love and game'. It also follows from the statement of Krishna that he was notorious for using unfair means in the play and would often fight with the playmates on some insignificant things. It is for this reason that he is making a specific declaration of his policy. The game '*gahi*' which is mentioned in the above line seems to be a sport of catching the members of the party. In the game called *akhamichauni* the person going to catch is blinded by closing the eyes and then letting loose to catch but there are some other catching games in which some distance is kept and at a signal the one who is to catch is allowed to go and the others make all sorts of tricks to avoid being caught for the one caught has to catch in his turn. It is sometimes played in the forests also where the trees serve to provide good places for hiding. In some cases the hiding is not to be there but the party persons take to the trees and go and jump from them to escape being caught. There are several rules to be followed as in the case of '*kaidanda*' where a stick is thrown and the person who is to catch the others is asked to catch the stick first which is thrown at a long distance and after getting the stick he is after others to catch them. And when he catches some one, who in his turn is to catch the stick first and then catch one member of the playing party. Thus this game in the trees is continued. There are many rules for this game also. For example the catching boy is not to leave the stick and cannot catch a boy so long as he is on a tree. He can catch him only on the ground. Thus hide and seek and *gahi* are the games for catching.

Geda or the ball has also been employed for several ball games. Many poets have described the *Kaliyadamana lila* or *kaliyānatha lila* which came about as the result of a game with the ball. It is said that some how the ball fell into a watery place and the one who was the cause of this mishap was to bring out the ball. It was, perhaps, the fault of Krishna or he offered to bring it out that he went down into the waters where a fierce serpent called Kaliya resided with his wives. It was a very poisonous snake and the water of the place was all polluted out of the poison that came out from the fangs of this serpent family. Krishna gave no heed to the words of advice for not going in the water. The result was that the snake got angry but great prowess was shown by Krishna and the serpent had to leave the place with his family and thus the game proved a boon to the people there.

There must have been some more games with the ball. It may be that in some a stick was also employed. Others have been with the throwing of the ball with the hands or the feet. But the games described above needed some physical exertion and there seems to be no scope for elderly persons. All these games were played by the children or by the budding youth which is, I think, the case everywhere.

Sājhī

Sājhī has two aspects one can go with art and the other in sport but the second one also comes in the category of artistic sport as apart from physical sport. In a *gutaka* found in Kota office of the RORI there is a description how preparations are made for the play, which seems to be a game of the religious type and is played by the girls at a particular time. It is not a play to be played on all days like the ones described above but the months of September/October when the festival of *Dashehra* comes there are days for its display. It consists of gathering flowers from the forest but the girls have to go properly attired with their ornaments. The lines go—

bana mẽ bĩnath phūla harakha sõ ḍaliyā sohe sātha
phūlana kẽ gẽda kãu āye lālāna sakhi na koī sātha
sãjhi ḍaliyā mẽ dhari linhī gāvata calī subhāī
ḍaliyā jamuna jala padharāī sabe lhāda sukha pāī

It seems balls were made of flowers and the flowers were washed in the water of the river Yamuna. The *sājhi* referred above seems to be a ball or a formation with the flowers gathered in the forest. But before reaching the forest the poet says that they were properly dressed and decorated—

keśa bicha pāṭi pāri
benī sagi gũtha māga mẽ sẽdura bhari banāī
lāye sīsa phūla ita chandā bicha laṭakana laṭakāi
kahyau laṛetī sājhī karihẽ phūla sabe kara chita

In connection with the observance of the event by Radha it is said that she went with several of the other girl as who went to her properly dressed

saba mili āī lāṛilī braṣabhāna nṛpati ke dvāra ho besara
chibuka birāja ho

And all these went for the play as said below—

ihi bidhi banī agādhā sādhā śri rādhājū sakhiyana mājha
biṭiyā bahuta ahirina kī mili khelana sājhī sājha ho
godhūlaka biriyā daliyā phūlana kau le chali hātha
bīnata phūlana jamuna kūlana syāmājū ke sātha ho
aika liye olī cholī para chāpi chibuka tana cīra
phūlana torata tanahi marorata jāha bhãvarana kī bhīra ho

From the above there are certain pieces of information about the play. The play was in company with several girls of the age. They were nicely dressed in clothes and ornaments. The author seems to be influenced by the eastern part of the area for using such terms as '*bitiya*', '*biriya*' meaning daughters and time respectively not used by the Braj people but it seems the poet somehow reached in a Rajasthan court of the raja. The girls carried with them baskets for gathering the flowers. It was to be observed near the dusk time or by that time the girls returned. They got flowers from the forest in a sportive way. On account of the flowers there were the black bees also. It so appears that some married women also joined because they are said to be putting the red vermilion in the parting of their hair. Unmarried girls do not have the red powder in that way. It is possible also for when there is the festival of '*Isaragangaura*' (Shiva and Parvati) there are some married women also who perform the worship of the deity with grass and flowers. After getting flowers and making balls with some of them they returned home. The event is mentioned in the following line as well.

bahuri sakhi kau bhekha syama kara
le sakhiyana pahuce ghara ana
sajhi khela kijiye byaru
kari ju kaleu jaiyau prata

Krishna used to join such plays but because the play was to be joined by girls only Krishna would make the appearance of a girl and join the playing *gopis* It seems that the play was held in the evening after which the evening meals were served and some of the playmates could stay at the house of the rich girl who would arrange for the stay and send them back next day after serving breakfast. As was proposed to Krishna who had reached there in the garb of a girl. The play it seems was through a ball—

saba mili āye laṛali brakhabhāna gopa ke dvāra ho
baha mẽ phūla birāja rahi ho khela sãjhi raṅga
mukalita kalī mõgare ki guhi hari kõ gẽda banāī
sundari saba sãjhi le phūlī̃ khelana sãjhi āī̃

There are several verses for event which point out the fact that they collected flowers from the forest in the basket which they carried with them and several flower balls were made.

bana bana bīnata phūla harakha sõ daliyā sohe hātha
phūla gẽda kau ārā lalanā sakhā na koū sātha ho

In connection with the *sājhi* it is said that they had to go in groups with all their ornaments and were expected to sing on the way—

'yahi sī̃gāra kari chalī laṛetī̃ saba mili gāvata gāna ho'

With all their choice ornaments they moved in groups singing. It is clear that the event was that of merriment and provided good enjoyment to all nearby. It seems to me that the play was with the help of flowers but later it was somehow not possible for the girls to have flowers and they took to a different device in which they had an earthen pot with several big holes in it. Inside they put a burning lamp which could throw its light through the holes and appeared to be a display of flowers which seem to be coming out in the form of light and shade. This play of *sājhi* is assigned to the girls but the boys were also not deprived of this type of play and they had '*ṭesū*' or '*Kesu*' as their play device. *Kesū* may recall Keshava another name for Krishna. In the play the boys tied three small sticks sideways crossing each other and in the space so formed at the place where the three sticks were tied they would place an earthen lamp like the one which was put by the girls inside the earthen pot. They would take this *kesu* from one house to another and would sing some boyish songs—

> *kesūrā ghanṭāra bajaiyo nau nagarī dasa gāon basaiyo*
> *basagaī nagarī āya gaye cora saṛī ḍukariyāī le gaye chora*
> *chorana ke ghara khetī bhai khāya ḍukariyā moṭi bhaī*

and so on

These two games was quite common some years back but now the practice is disappearing as boys and girls seem to have no time or perhaps no fancy for such plays. It is just like the play with sticks for the boys on the day when lord Ganesha is worshipped for the grant of knowledge and in the afternoon party of boys would go out under the guidance of the village teacher who would get some money gifts and the boys will sing many benedictory songs and get some sweets for their performance. Some of the songs were very funny indeed.

> *aika baniye kā sunau bayāna baṛe bhora khole dūkāna*
> *aika cuhī na mana mẽ ḍari dauṛa seṭha kī dhotī paṛī*
> *chū̃ chū̃ chū̃ chū̃ dhotī mẽ kare baniyā dhotī pakre phire*
> *ai cūhī tū bāhar ā ghī śakkara kau bhoga lagā*

and so on

And for a qurrelsome woman they would sing

> *aika nakaṭi kā sunau bayāna chajje beṭhī cābe pāna*
> *haṛiyā phūṭa culhe mẽ girī chūtara piṭa khasam tẽ laṛī*

or the affair of the in-laws (the wife and the brother of a person)

bhāvī nẽ devara lalkārau baṛe subakate ṭhappaṛa māryau
tũ tere bhaiyā donau marau mote tuma kyõ ṭhare larau
bhaiyā tẽ kā hoya gujarau to bina dolũ mārau mārau

All these plays—the *sājhi*, the *gangaura*, the *dandachautha* involved some kind of singing and playing on particular occasions and were called games. For the last one describe above was called *dandakhelana* and the *sajhi* also as *sanjhikhelana*. They were quite sort of plays involving some kind of art and were fixed as for the time of their play. These plays can also be termed as festivals because they had fixed time, fixed ceremony and behind them was some religious fervour. For getting knowledge the boys had the *ganeshachautha* and for getting a good bridegroom the girls had *gangaura*. *Sājhi* also acquired a religious significance and were directed in the same direction of a suitable match.

Hatari

Hatari is the festival-play in connection with the festival of *Diwali*. It is a play in the sense that it provided lot of merriment to all concerned. In this connection we have a *pada*—

giradhara haṭarī bhalī banāī
dipāvali ita uta rājata he dekhata harakhata ati mana bhāī
aneka bhãti mevā miṣṭanna ke ati nūtana nūtana sukhadāī
sundara bhūkhana pahire sundari saudā karana lālā sāu āī
sāvadhāna hvẽ saudā kīje līje tola purāī
rakho chita chancala nahi kīje gvālina bahuta hãsi musukāī
kesau bolata laṅgara gvālina kahata jasodā rānī
paramānanda hãsi nāda gharanī sabe bāta mẽ jānī

A good *hatari* was made and it was filled with all kinds of sweets. It seems there was some kind of bargain for getting the contents of the *hatari* for which purpose a woman came and tried to make a bargain with Krishna. She wanted to compose herself but had to laugh a lot on the activities of the boy Krishna who was a greater cheat than what the woman thought. She got a bit hurt and reported the matter to the mother who in return said that she was well aware of the entire thing and there is no use making unnecessary complaint.

The formation of the *hatari* is described thus—

haṭarī beṭhe srigopāla
ratana jaṭita kī haṭarī banāī motina jhūmaka parama rasāla
thaura thaura kī lāī kulariyā bhari bhari dharai pakavāna
rasāla
pāna phūla aru mevā sahita le bāṭata nanda ke lāla

The contents of the *hatari* are distributed to the persons who go there. It contained all sorts of stuff, sweets, dry fruits, beetle leaves, and some other things which were kept in different apartments and in small pots called *kulariya*. The same practice on the *diwali* day is observed in the Braj houses in the families who are rather traditional. The playful aspect comes when there is a general distribution of all the contents of the *hatari* and children make an attempt to get the best items out of the distributed articles. The poet gives a better description in the following line composed by Govinda—

hatari bethe srigopala
ratana jatata ki hatari bani he motina jhalara parama
rasāla
dhara dharakuli aura kulhaiya bhari bhari dhare pakavana
rasāla
pāna phula aru sodhe sahita saba batata he de Nanda ke
lala
ramavali premavali lalita candravali brajmangali bala
saba sundari ghara ghara te ai nirkhata nena bisala
Govinda prabhu priya chita choryau badhi prema ke jala

All the *gopis* gathered there for the fun because not only they expected nice presents but were to watch the playful activities of their beloved Krishna who was to make the playful distribution on the occasion.

In some families the festival or the play of *hatari* is observed after the main festival of *diwali*—

dipadāna de haṭarī beṭhe nandabābā ke sātha

nana vidhi ki mevā magāī bāṭata apne hātha or
dipadāna de haṭari beṭhe navala lāla Govardhanadhārī

As the festival play was observed in the area where the cow holds a very important part they too were not forgotten on the occasion

surabhi kā̃na jagāī kharika bali mohana bethe rājata haṭarī
pistā dākha badāma chuhāre khurmā khājā gūjha maṭharī
ghara ghara tẽ narā nāri muditā mana gopi gvālā jure bahu ṭhāṭharī
sūrarasika giradhara cira jivau nanda mahara kau nāgara batarī

It is thought that by observing this festival in this playful way the person undertaking this will get lot of wealth and other material articles. I considered it under the caption of sports because it creates such a lot of fun and all seem to enjoy it. The episode of the play of Krishna and *gopis* is also exhibited in this and it can well go under the caption. The entire period is full of mirth and merriment.

It appears from above that whereas there were some plays only for the sake of exercise there are others which go to give an expression of the inner artistic nature of the man. In the Braj area there are many such things which go to please in a very attractive way. I am reminded yet of another activity in the area which is purely of a literary nature—it is the enjoyment of people by way of reciting the verses in *Savaiya* and *Kavitta* while they are at the *Bagichi* or at some other place. They would take up a subject and go on telling in turn verses composed by poets and each one will take his turn. This throws light on the type of plays the people had—physical, artistic and literary.

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

It is bit of a task to derive from the compositions some conclusions about the language and literature of the place. In culture this also forms a part and it will be attempted to give just an idea. The language spoken in Braj is *Brajbhasha* and it had a very prosperous past being the literary language of the whole of north India including far of deserts of Rajasthan and one skirts of the Bengal. The large number of manuscripts that we find speaks of the rich past and the contribution of the native chiefs was an asset to the spread of the language. Of course the language used was Braj but it had local influences from place to place and it can be easily detected in the verses after a little scrutiny. Sometimes the influence of the locality was so great that we have to give another name to the language used; this is often seen in the works of poets residing for a long time in Rajasthan. Some verses are, in fact, Rajasthani for they have all the characteristics of that language. I do not wish to enter into a discussion of the linguistic phenomena of this area or of the places where the influence of the cult was considerable, my only objective is to give some taste of the tendencies that are to be found in the existing manuscripts.

Braj idioms

Every place has its own idioms and here I quote just some to make my point clear—

kara lage nahī rāvarau rājā śri vriṣbhāna
saraka jāhu aba gela tẽ yamẽ saba sanamāna

Now '*sarakajana*' to frisk away is a Braj expression and so is '*gela*' in the meaning of way. We often hear terms like '*pare saraka ja*' move away a little. So is the *gela rokana* by Girdhari, in the sense of obstructing the way by Krishna.

batẽ karata ṭhaṭhola ki ṭhagiyā niṭhurā kaṭhora
nẽna sẽna aru bẽna tẽ mẽna dikhāvata jora

Here *ṭhaṭholī* is the word of interest. This means in a joking way. *Ṭhaṭhola* is joke and *ṭhaṭholī* is the joking way. Another word of the same origin *ṭhathṭhā* also means a joke.

Connected with this is the word '*ṭhaṭhtha*' meaning crowd. *gopi gvala jure bahu thathari* are used in large numbers. We also say '*thaththa ke thaththa* in the same sense.

There are some verses having several local expressions—

āja karū pānī tẽ patarau yāhi jasomata māī

This is from *Makhanalīla* when the *gopi* succeeded in getting hold of Krishna and is informing the mother Yasoda that she will make him thinner than water meaning give him a good trashing to minimise his bodily structure. Water is supposed to be very thin and to make one thinner than water mean to give a good beating and reduce his very much.

In another text by the same author '*Damodaralila*' we have—

> *bahuta dinana tẽ mẽ taki lāgi laṅgara hātha na āve*
> *yatẽ khuṭaka khari ura mere ākhana mẽ kasakāve*'

There are three four terms worthy of consideration—

'*taki lagi*' was on the look for; watching the occasion keenly

'*laṅgara*' a cunning fellow making mischief

'*khuṭaka*' something pricking or paining a little

'*khari*' in fact of a real nature

ā̃khana me kasakāve' pains by seeing, not nice to look at, being rather painful.

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